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WORK, PLAY, AND THE GOSPEL

MALCOLM SPENCER, M.A.

WORK, PLAY, AND THE GOSPEL

BY

MALCOLM SPENCER, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH," "IMPASSE OR OPPORTUNITY?" ETC.

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CHAPTER I

THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

I. The Need for a New Evangelism

Those whose religious experiences are deep are prone to love old ways of presenting them to others, and sometimes these grow shallow as the currents of the world's experience change and desert them. New ways are then needed, and provocation to seek them. So, to-day, new ways of approach to the problem of preaching the gospel are called for—and happily are being found.

That this is so means neither any slight to the Gospel nor any compliment to the modern mind. The Gospel, in all essentials, is unchanging; for it rests upon immutable facts concerning Jesus Christ His life and teaching, His death and resurrection; and there lies its power of appeal. Age cannot wither its eternal message to the human spirit; though custom may a little stale the forms and metaphors in which it is set forth. When, then, we speak of our age needing a new evangelism it is

not the Evangel but the "ism" which, we think, needs to be renewed—the method of approach to the hearer's mind. A number of plain facts well known to those who are studying the way in which attention may be held, conviction formed, and character evolved, convince us that this is so.

The primary need for some such new approach arises from the fact that a wrong conception of Christianity now fills the popular mind; and, therefore, whilst this is so, accustomed methods of presenting the Gospel must necessarily tend to re-awaken the wrong as well as the right features in the popular view. In a word, the Christianity of the Churches is associated in the mind of the ordinary person with a way of life which he frankly does not believe to embody all the best things which life has to offer, whilst the evangelist often appears to him in the rôle of one who can only make the choice of it seem worth while, by offering him compensating interests in this world, and corresponding expectations in the world to come, of a kind he does not really understand or value.

Now this is all very well for those who have come up against some outstanding personal problem of sin from which "religion" has offered them welcome deliverance: they then feel themselves so utterly glad to be rid of the past that they are prepared to sacrifice some of the good things which they valued formerly—as the just price of their new freedom. But for those who are not so harassed by a particular moral need, religious conversion is apt to be secured, if at all, at the cost of a dangerous suppression of their real self, and

the result is evidenced in some cases by a wildly fanatical and quite unreasoning zeal, but more frequently by an only half-hearted attachment to the new way of life.

Put very briefly, the difficulty is that Christianity is associated popularly with the acceptance of an unduly ascetic ideal of life, an unreasonable narrowing of life's legitimate interests, an unthoughtful use of the Bible and other means of grace, and an unsportsmanlike anxiety about one's own soul. Under these circumstances evangelism has to take its choice between two ways. It may either try to meet the situation by ignoring the existence of any real problem, proceeding then to reiterate its own beliefs, and taking care to create the most favourable occasions possible for their acceptance —as now in not a few well-advertised revivalist missions ; or it may try the slower method of the educational approach.

II. The Alternatives

The tendency of those who take the former course is to disparage the everyday life of the world, to regard enthusiasm for recreation, or art, or business, or thought, or social reform, as dangerous rivals to the claims of Christ, to hold to reactionary views of the Bible, to repeat the doctrinal shibboleths of the nineteenth century, to despair of seeing Christian influences penetrate the social life of the world, and to be content with this so long as individual "souls" are saved. However much good may be achieved along these lines it is

impossible to expect that such evangelism can ever succeed in meeting more than the tiniest fraction of the needs of this generation. Violence is done to the instinctive and quite proper reserve of a personality when the citadel of the soul is captured by an assault on the emotions that does not at the same time satisfy the whole mind. Moreover, men and women are then rushed into positions which they cannot possibly continue to hold, since parts of their personalities remain unconvinced and unsatisfied.

We cannot too clearly lay hold of the fact that " conversion " is only possible for the man who has in his mind two fairly well articulated systems of life which are mutually exclusive, one of which he is following and knows he should renounce, and the other of which he is neglecting and knows he should espouse, and these contrasted schemes of life are not present in most minds nowadays. Indeed, they are very far from being present, and their absence makes the appeal to decide between them fatuous. Till we have established in the hearer's mind, as truth, the idea that Christianity stands for a fully satisfying life, we cannot wish him to be converted. The Christian scheme of thought and way of life need then to be presented as the practical way to the realisation of an all-inclusive ideal of life, and not merely as demanded on the authority of the Bible, or of the Church, or as meeting any need of salvation which has to be aroused by suggestion before it is felt in any real sense.

There are, doubtless, many whose training has sufficiently persuaded them that to be a Christian

is the only really right and completely satisfying thing to be done, and their need is for something to rush them past and over their unworthy hesitations and delays. But this is not the typical case. The typical case is one in which the idea of Christ and Christianity is neither intellectually coherent nor morally convincing. In the popular mind religion stands for the disavowal of things felt to be right and good, and the acceptance of a discipline felt to be both irksome and arbitrary. The practical obligations of Christian discipleship are vague and shadowy, and not truly representative of Christ. Hence the need for a clearer background of what Christian living means before the appeal for Christian decision can be pressed.

We are therefore bound to recognise the difficulties of the position, and to face them out; and this is the educational way of approach to evangelism. Its primary difference from the alternative method we have so briefly described is this: that it believes that the Gospel is indeed the Crown and fulfilment of the natural life and not its jealous rival. Through all the social life of man it sees the movement of the Spirit of God toward high and worthy forms of life. In the passion for gratification in play, or in the ambition for success in business, or in devotion to the claims of historic truth, or the call of some great cause in politics, it sees the human spirit struggling to realise its divine possibilities and needing only guidance and a true vision of life to bring it through to its spiritual goal. It does not seek to save the soul by diverting its attention from these human interests and aims,

but by discovering their deeper meanings and higher possibilities, and by pointing out things in them all on which the stamp of God's approval can be set. Its aim is a personality in which all the native energies which man possesses for enjoyment and achievement wax strong, and support and harmonise with one another, because all are made contributory to the wholly satisfying and all-inclusive purpose revealed for humanity in Jesus Christ. The temptation of the educational method is to sow to the spirit more than it knows how to reap ; its strength lies in its fundamental faith that man, in all the variety of his social impulses, is indeed made in the image of God. With this belief we shall, throughout this book, try to connect the ideas for which education and evangelism respectively stand.

III. Educational Ideals

In turning, as we do turn in this book, to the science of education for light on the methods of evangelism, we do so, of course, with reservations. We are not giving ourselves over, bound hand and foot, to an empirical science. The work done by the teaching profession and by those who have studied the theory of teaching, sheds abundant light upon the processes by which minds grow and character is formed. It shows quite clearly the hollowness and instability of conversions reached by certain processes and of choices made under certain conditions. It knows a good deal of the genesis of the human mind and the laws of its elementary workings, and it provides implements of criticism by

which to test the wisdom of this method and of that. The value of what the educationists are teaching about method can hardly be overrated by those who understand the need to respect the unity of human personality. At the same time there are heights of personality which the educationist as such has not scaled and depths which he has not plumbed. Great is the mystery of the human soul, and among "the masters of those that know" we must turn sometimes for our clues to the evidence of the saints who had no educational theories to help or to check them, and to the experience of evangelists and revivalists of all degrees of educational competence. For as those concerned in the Gospel, we want to help to fashion personalities that not only love goodness, truth, and beauty, but that attain through these things to a personal communion with a personal God. We want to see men and women converted to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All this does not, however, take away one whit from the value of the discoveries made by those who have worked in the field of education, concerning the way in which the spiritual unfolding of human nature may best proceed. And we may feel fully justified in looking for guidance from this quarter, since we know that modern educationists, or at least an important section of them, accept a view of the ultimate aim and purpose of education which makes it essentially spiritual, and even evangelical. For it is the fact that, for many educators, the whole purpose of education is to awaken the personality of the pupil to the truth and beauty and goodness

which God has impressed upon the world. Whether they are teaching history or geography or mathematics, they are trying to pass on their own sense of the wonder of life, its deep worth-whileness, the stores of joy to be found in entering into all its manifold revelations of God's goodwill to man, its moving appeals to his better nature, and its calls for his response to the purposes of creation.

The best teachers of to-day are not trying to turn little boys and girls into effective little ready-reckoners, each made on the same pattern, to say "please" and "thank you" and be industrious in making money and getting on. They are treating them as God's children, born into God's world to enjoy what is good and right in it, and to fill their beings so full of its goodness and rightness that they become themselves persons in the divine likeness, with the power of the divine spirit working in them and making them new sources of creative goodness according to their several abilities. The educator is thus seeking not only and not even primarily to pass on what he knows of life to those whom he teaches; he is seeking primarily to help them, by looking at the world through his and their own eyes, to discover themselves and God. Some will say quite definitely that the only adequate aim of any education is a vision of God's purpose for the world which will give unity and purpose to each individual life. Thus a recent great book on education,* which Prof. Michael Sadler hails as a permanent classic, makes the end of all education the establishment in the mind of the pupil of a

* "Education and World Citizenship," by J. Maxwell Garnett.

single all-embracing interest, the interest of establishing the Kingdom of God upon earth. In that definition the educationist joins hands with the evangelist and implicitly commits himself to the need for the Gospel as the crown of his work. At the same time, he binds upon the evangelist the duty of showing how the principles of the Gospel can be made operative over the whole of life. He demands that the Christian's experience of Christ should be shown to be no mere fragment or section of his total experience, but that the whole of his life, with all its business and social interests, should be an experience of living for and with Christ.

Those educationists who take this view have seized upon an essentially Christian conception of personality and built upon it. In some ways such educationists are more evangelical than some evangelists—they have a bigger gospel; they promise a life more full of God in all its earthly relationships, without waiting for death to release its larger spiritual possibilities. They view the child (and later the adult) as essentially a spiritual being, with a wonderful power of free response to ideal impulses and an instinct for expressing these in action in the material world. All the child's faculties are capable of being brought into harmony with one another in the service of these ideals, if they are not foolishly repressed or perverted. The educator may not be prepared to dogmatise about the lengths to which the development of the individual may go. That is the evangelist's business. But he is prepared to assure us that there is an almost universal appetite among children for the finer and higher

things in life, that all the child's instincts and powers can be educated into harmony and made to serve a spiritual ideal, and that the unfolding in him of a fine moral and spiritual life is a strictly natural development. It is a tremendous fact to work upon and one from which the skilful educator gets full value.

See, for instance, what the educationist makes of the child's instinct for play. He recognises in it an activity into which the child has a natural aptitude for pouring all his energy and so building himself up. Get him at play, and you get him with all his senses alert and his being malleable. Then guide his play, and you can mould him as by no other means. You can teach him to play himself right through the gateways into the Kingdom of God. By play he may be taught skill and sympathy, unselfishness and co-operation. Even the spirit of worship may be fostered through play; and all because the natural is a fit medium for the spiritual. Here, indeed, is one of the points where the evangelist has most to learn from the educator. "Give me the child at play," says the educator, "I ask no better opportunity for educational influence." "Play," says many an evangelist of to-day, "is my great enemy; the dances and the tennis-courts have driven me from my field, and now I am threatened with their rivalry even on Sunday: where will religion be found in the next decade?" We need to learn from the educator how to utilise for spiritual purposes the profusion of the modern passion for play. May not these pleasure-seekers in some instances also be drawn through play at

least to the portals of the Kingdom of God, just as is now the case with their younger brothers and sisters at school? The issue may seem a trivial one, but it is not. It is fundamental.

Behind this use of play by the modern educationist lies a truly evangelical philosophy of life and personality. It is found not only in the educationist's "good news" that the abundant energies of youth can be directed naturally into the furtherance of what is good, true, and desirable; it is found also in the recognition that if these energies are to be so devoted with vigour and enthusiasm, the spirit must be led towards its goal by free and unhurried steps. You cannot drive or thwack personality into the acceptance of ideals; you can only lead it thither at its own pace. You can give the opportunity for the things which are worthy of admiration to exert their own attraction. You cannot impose your own values on the minds of others. When education was regarded as a matter of transmitting to children the settled habits and ideas of their elders, it did seem as though the process could be consummated with whips and sharp injunctions; authority always standing in the background ready to enforce its rules and standards with reiterations or punishments. But we know now that what you procure in that way is either a sullen spirit of revolt smouldering beneath an inert obedience, or at the best a sterile acceptance of the code imposed, lacking the energy and enthusiasm of an independent conviction. You cannot produce conviction by heavy insistence: you can only produce conviction by convincing, and that is a

process which consists in producing evidence that what is alleged to be true is true when put to the test. All this will be seen to be relevant to the problem of evangelism when we come to consider the way in which the herald of the gospel hopes to win his hold upon the modern, not too favourably biased, mind.

IV. The Present Opportunity

The evangelism for which we argue is therefore closely allied with the more spiritual schools of educational principle which now most certainly hold the field. And thus it follows that the preacher can build his methods to-day upon the experience of the teacher, and in practice each can play into the hands of the other. This will be a tremendous gain to both education and religion if full advantage be taken of it. For a long time, teacher and preacher have been at cross purposes, and education has not been seen by either as a partnership in a single spiritual process. But if the inherence of spiritual suggestions and ideals in all material facts and the evidence of spiritual evolution in all human history could now be recognised by teacher and preacher alike, the teacher could build up his scholars in a spiritual conception of the world which the preacher could afterwards confirm with his crowning message of the supreme personal relation declared possible in the Gospel between individuals and God.

Preacher and teacher being thus seen to have a common purpose, the aim of education might grow clearer to both, and the methods of evangelism gain

particularly in precision by the more exact results of educational study. Moreover, the gain to evangelism would not merely be in the realm of method. Educational thinking has, as we have seen, worked out a great conception of the royal freedom and divine capacity of each individual mind, wonderfully interpreting and emphasising the Christian conception of the value of the soul. Education has thus taken up a conception which it gained originally from Christianity and has articulated it so clearly that the content of the Gospel is permanently enriched. No one who desires to preach the Gospel to modern minds can afford to be negligent of the truth so clearly unfolded.

Yet whilst we emphasise the spiritual unity of life, the spiritual tendencies of human nature, the urge of the Spirit of God toward the achievement of its ideals of goodness and loveliness by many means, and on every hand, we do not forget that the Power and Beauty of the Spirit of God are not manifested equally in every sphere of life. They are manifested supremely in Jesus Christ alone, and less perfectly, though still magnificently, in the lives which have most utterly yielded to the inflow of His divine life into themselves. So the educational process falls short of its consummation unless it is completed by the evangelist who has nothing to tell the world save the story of Jesus and His disciples.

Moreover, though the spiritual unfolding of personality may be indeed a strictly natural process, toward which the education of every human

faculty may contribute, yet there is a downward pull toward death and stagnation to be reckoned with, and an evil will in man which resists the upward climb. There is a stiff fight for goodness to be fought out in every life, and no one has yet put forward any claimant for the power to overcome the lure of evil other than Jesus Christ. The power to save men from the strong things which tend toward corruption and to bind them to the exacting courses which make for life is His and His alone. He only can lift the degenerate from their lethargy and worldly-mindedness, and do away with our dull conventionality of soul. The Gospel is not written in the book of Nature, nor in the book of History, except as interpreted by Him. The vision of Jesus and the story of what He has meant to men are the supreme facts to which men need to respond for their salvation, and the right presentation of them, which is the work of the evangelist, is therefore the supreme task of those who know the secret of life in Christ.

From this the presentation of the Gospel might seem to be a matter requiring no particular educational skill—as though Jesus were so supreme a figure that no art of presentation could either add to or diminish the direct power of His appeal. And yet we know that this is not so. For since we cannot easily, or without art, divest our statements of any facts from our habitual interpretation of them, so in preaching Christ we shall tend to emphasise those aspects of His work and personality which have most appealed to us, and perhaps to hide or obscure what would more readily appeal to

others. Before, therefore, we attempt to state the essential message of the Gospel, we turn to consider the modern attitude to religion, and especially the attitude of those who are young,—if so be that we may find there our clue to the best method of its presentation.

Footnote to Chapter I

For the view of education taken in this chapter and applied to the problems of religious education, especially in my closing chapter, I am very largely indebted to T. Percy Nunn, Professor of Education in the University of London. I should like to refer particularly to his book in the Modern Educator's Library (Edward Arnold, 6*s*.) entitled, *Education: its Data and First Principles*.

CHAPTER II

THOSE WHO PASS THE GOSPEL BY

How variously different speakers and writers estimate the religious condition of our time! To some it is an age when morals are declining and the faith is being put in pawn by its own adherents in their eagerness to do homage to the modern mind. By others it is said that never was there a time when Christianity was so widely and truly understood, so seriously taken as it is by those who still profess and call themselves Christian. But in no quarter is there found any question of the general public revolt from the practice of public worship, and the practical severance of the ties which held many to the Church. It is quite symptomatic that our streets are thronged with pleasure-seekers at the time conventionally appointed for the united seeking of God in prayer.

The single fact of widest bearing that underlies these diverse estimates is that this is an age of enfranchisement from the conventions of the past. If there are fewer professing Christians than there were, it is in the main because men are ceasing to make profession of religion merely conventionally. Whether in moral or spiritual matters, the sort of authority which held the majority, weakly compliant but not enthusiastically convinced, has lost

its ascendancy. The world is growing up and asking questions ; it is refusing to be satisfied with the answers which satisfied it of old. Those who persevere with their questions come through to a faith which means more to them, in some ways, than the faith which was more traditionally and less questioningly acquired. But we cannot claim that the change is all clear gain. The faith that has been thus fought for is sometimes scarred and maimed. Christians who ask questions of their faith sometimes ask more than their experience can answer, and bear about them the marks of their dissatisfaction with their own solutions. There is less of that easy optimism and cocksureness which enabled the religious to carry the day with the unthinking, and which was the basis (by suggestion) of so much of the good and evil of the past. Leaving aside, however, the inner ring of more or less convinced believers in Christianity, to whom the change has brought much benefit, we have to consider the needs of the crowd which has for the moment slipped away from the direct influence of expressed religion. It is with this pressing problem that evangelism has particularly to deal.

Before, however, we enter upon our detailed analysis of the problem let us be sure that the present phenomena cannot mean any sudden fundamental collapse in the spiritual susceptibility of those with whom we have to do. Fundamentally they are much the same as their forefathers. They have the same emotions, the same physical and psychic needs, the same susceptibility to experience, the same affinities with good and evil. The

educational sciences forbid us to believe in any such sudden slump in human nature as the scaremongers in the religious world would have us affirm. Fundamentally these men and women who on Sunday shut themselves in their suburban gardens, are the same as their fathers who never failed to go to Church. These boys and girls who swarm along the city streets are not less religiously inclined than their predecessors. Their religious development is arrested, and they will suffer for it; but there is nothing portentous or overwhelming in the present phase of things. By those who have faith and patience, there is a solution to be found, and the clues to its discovery are known to those who are experienced in observing the ways of the human mind.

But whether this be admitted or no, it is plainly futile to rail at the iniquity of a generation and bemoan its evil tendencies. It is as absurd to indict a whole generation as it is to indict a whole nation. What is found common to them all is, for each single one of them, virtually inevitable, in view of the strong hold of public opinion over unawakened minds; each average individual is the child of an environment whose moulding tendencies all but overwhelm the puny forces which are at his call. When the religious response of multitudes is as deficient as it is to-day, it must be due to some radical blemish in the religious influences of the times. We can only meet the situation by ceasing to rail at it and learning to diagnose it. Diagnosis will reveal both the nature of the trouble and the point at which it must be attacked; it may also

afford at least some clue to the proper remedy. We are not for a moment inclined to discharge any class of individuals from their own particular share of responsibility for the use they are making of the light and leading God has given them ; but if we would lay that responsibility as heavily upon them as it should be laid, we are bound to recognise, first of all, how tightly they are gripped by the thought forces in their social environment. We shall have to discriminate presently between what is good and what is evil in these modern fashions of thought.

What, then, are the characteristics of the religious indifference of the hour ? What, especially, is the religious outlook of those who are young enough to be the representatives of the post-war period ? What in the mental make-up of the young people of the present day are the fundamental factors which we must take for granted as the undeniable data for our problem—to be met, not with reproach but with understanding and sympathy ? Analysis carried far enough will reveal to us in every case that they are the intelligible perversions of natural tendencies which might be diverted or converted to good ends if only they were understood. But first, what are they ? Three in particular claim attention.

I. The Craze for Pleasure

Let us begin with the most obvious and immediately disconcerting factor of all, the modern passion for pleasure—a passion which modern

business enterprise so successfully exploits. Not of this generation will any prophet say, "I have piped unto you, and ye have not danced." The world is drinking in amusement like a thirsty horse with its head in the river. But who can wonder, whilst we are not yet ten years beyond the gloomy terrors of universal war which robbed the young manhood of the nation of its most irresponsible years? Who can wonder when the girlhood of the nation has just passed through a total subversion of its old standards of living; when the old-time notion of a stay-at-home life as the girl's inevitable portion has been swept completely away; when girls have been everywhere and done everything, and raised money enough to live in unaccustomed luxury; who can wonder when the whole world of young people has awakened up with a start to the idea that it has been kept in pupilage too late and too long?

Youth has been discovering the thrill of physical health and vigour, the joy of bodily grace and movement: how natural, then, its repudiation of the stuffy ways of a generation which so wrapped its body up that it was always liable physically to cold and anæmia, and morally to prudery and acidity of mind! How rightly, too, is it in revolt against a civilisation which has let millions live in the dark and murk and dirt of city slums, which has maimed and stunted millions more in occupations beyond the normal endurance of the human frame, and which has made æsthetic and intellectual satisfaction the prerogative of the few! How natural if, instead, it is now claiming its fill of light and air and fun and fitness!

Dr. Rufus Jones has said recently that we are confronted by a generation of boys and girls who seem to be unconcerned whether God exists or not. They are not lawless ; they merely appear to have no interest in religion. They have eliminated that dimension of the soul which opens out into fellowship with a great, invisible Companion. The greater number of young people, says another witness, so fill their lives with pleasure and work, and live at such a speed that they have no time for quiet and reflection. It is not that they are essentially more frivolous than the young men and women, for example, of a hundred years ago. On the whole they compare favourably with the young ladies and gentlemen of the pages of Jane Austen. But the Christian life seems to them dull, uneventful, and inartistic, and without appeal to their abundant activity. No place can be found in it for the self-expression shown, for example, in their love of games. The Christian ideal of life inculcates self-restraint, self-denial, and effacement ; they feel that it would force them into an atmosphere which would stifle them. Many forms of heroism make an appeal to them, but not this form. Partly because they are generous-minded the offer of individual salvation makes no appeal to them ; nor are they afflicted with a sense of sin which might make the offer more acceptable. They are not indecisive, nor yet indifferent ; their strong devotion to pleasure and sport proves this. They are capable of great enthusiasm. But their sense of values is wrong. Some day they may learn the paradox that " He that loseth his life shall find it." But at present

the call they hear is a call to take hold of the things life offers them, to enjoy them, and prove their worth, and so they follow their natural instincts and desires to excess. The tide race of their physical nature is now running fast and will not be turned back by any pious indignation or highly spiced variety of religious emotional appeal. A hunger for the sweetness and the colour of life has been created, first by years of starvation, and then by a riot of opportunity for sense satisfaction. It may well be a matter of sheer biological advisability that the hunger should be satisfied. As the British Medical Association has been saying, a certain amount of conviviality is necessary at all times for the maintenance of our mental stability, and what is true generally must be specially true to-day. Certainly it is for the educator to accept the fact of this hunger and to offer ways of satisfaction that are spiritually educative.

The last remark implies that there is in this hunger for pleasure some hunger of the spirit, which can be discriminated from the lower hunger of flesh and sense, and fed with spiritual bread. And surely there is. There is a hunger of the spirit for gaiety and a refusal of the bread and water of affliction that must be dear to the heart of Jesus when He said, "Take no anxious thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This generation has been taught that its total energies must be absorbed in eating and fighting, and producing the means to eat and fight. It may be that, mixed up with the pleasure hunger of the day, there is a

spiritual revolt against the dark modern philosophy of a commercial age which has left too little room for the cultivation of joy. Duty first, pleasure afterwards, is an unimpeachable doctrine to many of our moral guides, but it is doubtful if it is not a damnable heresy from the Christian standpoint. It implies that there is no pleasure in duty and no duty in pleasure, and the divorce between the two is a wicked indictment of the bounty of God's provision for the world.

There are many who say plainly that as it works out, it means that they may break their backs and starve their souls to produce wealth and ever more wealth for the wealthy; and to many of those who are not poor themselves, it means that they must live in harness till they are blind to all values but the values of getting on. This country, without any shadow of doubt, has sacrificed its sense of light and shade, of charm and beauty, of melody and gaiety, to the gods of steel and iron, and to the virtue of getting on. And we are poor in imagination, poor in artistic capacity, poor in abstract thought because of this. We have cultivated a dull insensibility to the appeals of the ideal world. The only time we have allowed to many to dream and frolic has been when they were already physically and emotionally exhausted with tending machines. It is to be remembered that we are not three generations away from the good folk who sent children into mines and factories before they were ten. And now reaction has set in—rather terribly—but thank God we are not any more going to spend all our lives padding our chairs, filling our

bellies, and inventing machinery for making everything plentiful and cheap.

Let it be clear, however, that this is not an unqualified plea for the present undisciplined demand for amusement. It is only a plea that we recognise as an element in the modern temper and revolt a vague sense of the worth of certain things which are indeed worthy, and whose worth both public opinion and evangelical teaching have failed to recognise. And the element in it that is good must be not only admitted, but made the starting point for a process of spiritual education. In the love of dance and drama, and the interest in pretty clothes and gay companionship, the starved æsthetic sense is finding its first crude expression. And the æsthetic value in life, as Clutton-Brock is insisting, is a fundamental thing, an absolute value, a spiritual ultimate. To deny or to ignore it is to foreclose the possibility of an all-round spiritual development for many, and to discredit one's own spiritual authority into the bargain. Those who have savoured the fundamental good in art and music (even maybe in the crude arts of jazz dancing and dressing for the part) are right in their instinctive feeling that those who belittle these things have a perverted sense of what is really good. Their spiritual education must come partly through the education of their æsthetic sense. Starved and unsatisfied, the æsthetic hunger will continually thwart the development of the spirit; recognised and guided it may be an avenue to a well-proportioned spiritual development.

Grant but the worthiness of even a part of this

desire for joy and beauty, and though we may regret the extent to which it cuts out other and ampler ideals, we can acquit the youth of to-day of any unforgivable sin. We can deal with the matter once we understand and sympathise. If we reflect how abruptly youth has awakened to the extraordinary capacity of mankind for finding enjoyment and the extraordinary fruitfulness of the world in yielding means to satisfy that taste for joy, we shall not wonder if it is doing so heedlessly, breathlessly, without taking time for serious reflection. But does this indicate a fundamentally selfish and materialistic outlook, a set opposition to altruism or religion, an antipathy to the true love of God or man ? Surely this is not the case. Youth has indeed found a new dimension in its capacity for enjoyment ; but youth has not committed itself to taking its enjoyment selfishly, or continuing to take it superficially. If, then, we are to win the enthusiasm of youth we must not frown upon this present mood, but build upon it, interpreting it, and showing how it may be fitted in as a true part of a bigger whole. In the main, I believe that the typical young folk inside the Church share this sense of the goodness of the material life with those outside it, and that they are unable to regard it as fundamentally at enmity with the best and highest life. The majority are so persuaded of this that they are only capable of being won to the highest by a hearty recognition of the goodness, in its own order, of the life to which they are already drawn.

May we not also set with this pleasure-loving

characteristic of modern youth the fact that it is strongly moved by the sufferings of those who are shut out of their natural inheritance of joy? It is strongly sympathetic with any who are treated with tyranny or cruelty. It is given to indignation against wrong. It is often secretly oppressed with the kink in the nature of things which seems to establish so much oppression and hardship in the structure of social life. Often it is less indifferent than paralysed by the spectacle of evil against which so little seems to be able to be done. What power on earth, it thinks, can stand up to the tragedy of Russian famine and Irish anarchy, and the present tragically low standard of earnings of the South Wales miners? It is not proved yet that the typical representatives of youth to-day would not be ready to forego much of their pleasure if they could thereby ensure a more decent distribution of the good things of life which they have themselves learned to appreciate. But they are not getting a lead to do so. They are not getting the motive of religion harnessed to their instinctive sympathy.

The practical ideal of unselfishness that should be commended to folk with such an outlook is the ideal of placing a physically good life within the reach of all. Its first principle, morally and spiritually, must be sharing, and sharing not of spiritual goods in abstraction from material goods, but of material goods with all the spiritual values that inhere in them when they are shared. The moral passion we ought to aim at arousing in the typical representative of this generation is a passion for realising

the social brotherhood of man, not as a mere sentiment, but as an actual sharing of the world's material goods and of the control of its material processes. The Spirit of God is striving with this generation to find an economic expression of brotherhood, with political arrangements making that economic brotherhood secure, and, therefore, the only religious movement for the day is one that is closely intertwined with the attempt to realise this ideal. If then we find a high value attached by this generation to material things, we should not spend our time lamenting it; but should be quick to turn it to advantage for the realisation of some great new expression of the ideal of brotherhood, some great new effort to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth.

This generation is indeed unlikely to accept a religion which takes a negative attitude towards the material and the physical, and centres its morality in the endeavour to keep the spirit of the individual disentangled from the interests of the flesh. It needs a religion which will enable men to possess the world and use it to the full, not selfishly, but with all-round good-will. It cannot take seriously the ascetic ideal of those who seem more bent on teaching people to be restrained and thoughtful than on helping them to make each other happy. If it is to be persuaded to devote itself to the service of others, it must be allowed to serve them first by making the world a pleasant place for all. It is only a minority of mankind whose altruism can or should express itself chiefly in the care of other people's minds and morals. Of course,

up to a point, we are all our brother's keepers both morally and spiritually. But the proportion of life is lost if we are all of us asked to exercise ourselves primarily for each other's mental development and good behaviour. That is the teacher's and the parson's speciality, and an honourable one. But we should hardly expect that people whose lives are spent for the most part in making or distributing material things should develop particularly along those lines. For the majority, surely, their altruism ought to express itself mainly, at first, in the sharing of material happiness of a well-chosen kind.

It might seem as if we were recommending a course of life which involves no moral discipline and no spiritual development, but is this so? Enlist the young of the world, first of all, in the enterprise of sharing the good things of the world, and much more will follow. The appeal to make service their serious aim in life, being one that they can understand, is one to which they will respond, and service will presently call for its own discipline to make it efficient and successful. Then, too, if the business of enjoyment be taken seriously it proves to be a rudimentary art which can be so cultivated that it discloses spiritual values, and demands a discipline of its own. Moral and spiritual choices are called for, and moral and spiritual growth is engendered if recreation is recognised as an important segment of the whole circle of life, in which there are ideals to be upheld.

If young people can be thus enlisted for ideals which they can understand, and in which ultimate

values are at stake, they will be prepared to face odds and difficulties when these occur. The difficulties will show themselves in a thousand forms, from the difficulty of teaching uncivilised hooligans to play the game in sport to the difficulty of teaching profiteering magnates and domineering foremen to play the game in industry. And when these difficulties bar the way to ideals which they have made their own, they will be ready to accept the discipline that is necessary in order to overcome them. They will discover that the conflicts which are involved in carrying their ideal through are spiritual, and will then be in a position to learn from Jesus, and from the Cross, the terms on which alone the battle with evil can be successfully won. But they will not be launched on this voyage of spiritual discovery at all if they are first required to discount their sense of life's values, because religious people say they should. So, then, the challenge of Christ to youth should be presented, not first of all in terms of the inner discipline and sacrifice that it may in the end involve, but first of all as a call to unselfish service and enjoyment. In the name of Christ, let us give youth a charge to take up that task, and a promise of His help in their endeavour. Once they embark upon it, we shall find that all the energies they derive from their natural self-expression in the form of play will be available for the cause of the Kingdom of Christ; and in place of undue self-expression and egotism, there will be that consecration of human instincts which, it has been said, is the very essence of Christianity.

II. The Revolt against Conventionality

A second mark of the modern revolt against religion can be more briefly dealt with, for it is more generally understood; viz., the revolt against conventional morality. Undoubtedly, the modern mind is now in open revolt against taboos of every kind. If a moral precept is right, it will be able to justify itself. So runs the argument; and it avails little to point out that it may need mature experience to appreciate the value of certain precepts and appeals. Youth will not ever listen to its mentors very readily, and still less in a day like ours, when the accepted moral wisdom of the world has been so seriously called in question by the failure of civilisation to eliminate industrial and international strife. Youth may not estimate the wisdom of its elders as highly as it would if it knew more of the burden and complexity of affairs. But that is not to be expected. The point of which youth is quite sure at present is that age is very fallible and the morality of the elders far from a complete success. Having been tumbled first into a world of war, and next into a world of social disorganisation, youth is inclined to wonder if all the morality of its monitors is not fumbling and merely traditional. It is not contended that this is an explicit line of argument; the main currents of the arguments which sway the judgments of a generation run underground, but this is the fair logic of events. So when morality says of any practice nothing more than "don't," youth says,

" Be hanged to you, why shouldn't I ? " And the moralists of this generation have, as we know, been caught in this way without a reasoned answer to the revolt against some of the most sacred of our moral maxims. Not even in such fundamental matters as the sanctity of marriage and the limits of sex intercourse will the more venturesome take rulings without reasons, and not even in these fundamental matters is the wisdom of the elders clear and convincing and direct.

Instinctively, youth to-day judges morality by its broad social outcome, and asks of the traditional morality whether or not it ministers to human good. On that showing, the majority of those who are morally alert give judgment against the morality which underlies the organisation of modern industrial and international society. The intellectual leaders of the youth of the world of all classes do not believe that the current organisation of business or of nations is consistent either with Christianity or with common sense. The established morality seems to them to be grounded on an outworn tradition. It is not a morality dictated by considerations of universal kindness. It seems rather to be dictated by considerations of self-preservation—moral self-preservation doubtless, but still self-preservation. It is of the " touch not, taste not, handle not " order, the aim of it being to save one's own skin. For youthful idealists it is too selfish, too cautious, too prone to refuse the joys of the moment for the sake of more dubious joys to come. We may argue that the vast majority of the youth of all classes are not youthful idealists,

and will not, therefore, hold or be influenced by these views, so that the adverse verdict of a minority does not signify. But it does: for these are the natural leaders of their contemporaries, and their moral judgment is of far more moment than the moral judgment of the elders.

Once again, it is not pretended that the instinctive moral standards of youth are more satisfactory than the traditional moral standards of age. They are, on the contrary, dangerously short-sighted, dangerously doctrinaire, and dangerously partisan. Even the ideals of those who are morally serious are apt to make class interests their horizon. In many quarters we have to face the perverse opposition of minds which have been thoroughly embittered by the past. But whilst these complicate the problem, they do not constitute its main feature. The common attitude is one of quite dispassionate aloofness, and frank but good-natured disregard of all that religion has to say, due to our failure to think out and proclaim a system of Christian conduct which will do justice to all the legitimate appetites of human nature and cover all the major needs of social life. This generation has not been convinced by Christianity because it has come to them *practically* associated with a morality of taboos, timidity, and fear; *theoretically* associated with a morality of love which they have not seen courageously applied to public life, and which, indeed, their elders (whether they be pious or pagan) tell them will not work. If this is an exaggeration, it is an exaggeration which contains a profound truth. Christianity seems to the more thoughtful to be

associated in practice with a morality which is discredited, and in theory with a morality which Christians do not consistently avow. For the less thoughtful it is associated with a morality which limits itself to a few phases of life and is blind to many of the values of life which seem to them real and of good report. The preaching of the Gospel to the multitude, therefore, demands a far more explicit conception of the Christian life and how it is to be lived, happily and effectively, amid the ordinary demands of social and industrial life.

Multitudes of Christian teachers and preachers there doubtless are, whose teaching and preaching is free from the blemishes which give rise to these misunderstandings of Christianity. It is they who are carrying on the bulk of the real and effective evangelistic work of the present day. But they are apt to class themselves, and to be classed, as educators rather than evangelists, and to leave the work of evangelism to others. They do not bring this message to the street corners. Indeed, it is generally true that those who have the broader Christian conception of life are leaving the more aggressive work of evangelism to others. There is much in the nature of the modern approach to account for this, but it is not satisfactory. It calls for redress. The modern message needs a sharper evangelistic edge. And one of the essentials for this is the articulation of a much more clear-cut conception of the principles on which Christian people ought to conduct themselves, both with regard to their work and with regard to their leisure. To be a Christian a man must be

converted to Christ's standard of values explicitly in relation to each of the great spheres of his interest and action. Conversion implies the exchange of one moral conception of life for another. Conviction of sin, repentance, consecration—all these, to be really effective, need to be not vague and general in their content, but quite specific. They call for a more decisively Christian conception of life.

III. The Disavowal of the Church's Leadership

We come now to the third mark of the modern revolt against religion—the disavowal of the Church's spiritual authority. The Christian conception of life is of course much more than a moral conception, though moral factors enter into it. It must be a spiritual conception. We cannot be content merely with right standards of conduct. Work and play and family life have their material sides and their earthly values, but they have also their spiritual side and their eternal values. We need to bring these out, teaching men to work and play together, and to love one another in ways that recognise that this world is only an episode in the life of our spirits, that we are each and all denizens of eternity, with immortal spirits made for spiritual communion with one another and with the Father from Whom came our being. But we must face the fact that the testimony to the eternal values of the unseen world, as it is given by the Church to-day, is already partly discredited by the Church's failure to appreciate truly the values of the things of time and sense. How shall we expect from the

multitude a ready credence for our teaching of the joys of communion with God, and the assurance of immortality when we have proved faltering and unreliable guides in matters more within their present knowledge and discretion ?

Were but the youth of to-day approached along the lines suggested, I believe that in the main they would respond eagerly to the deeper message of the Church. For there is behind their superficial absorption in activity and amusement a hunger for a more satisfying conception of life. They are driven to find sensuous satisfaction in pleasure, in part because they can find so little spiritual satisfaction in work. It is in the recoil from forms of activity which have no moral attraction and no spiritual purpose that they plunge into forms of recreation which have so little of either spiritual or moral worth. But they are not deeply satisfied with their choice. They cannot rescind it because it is based in deep instincts which they cannot ignore ; and they cannot, therefore, turn sincerely to a religious ideal which takes no real account of these. At the same time they hunger for something more. They want their passion to make life good interpreted to them in spiritual terms. They want to learn the spiritual conditions by which alone they can make good for themselves, and in their relations with each other, boy with girl, and friend with friend. Along these lines they are more than ready to enter Christ's Kingdom ; but they must be taken where they stand and shown how the good they already know leads on to the larger deeper good for which as yet they only grope and hunger.

We have to consider how much there is in the Christian message which is strange and terrifying. We owe it to youth to make our account of it credible by first making cogent and satisfying that part of it which is nearest the edge of their comprehension.

We must also remember that the modern person is the product of a century of tremendous absorption in practical achievement, during which a scientific view of the world has come to be characteristic of every normal citizen. He is quite sure of the reality of the world of matter, and not nearly so sure of the reality of the world of spirit. The precision of man's knowledge in the sphere of material things, as against the fluctuation of opinion in the sphere of spiritual knowledge, has given a sense of truth to the one and a suspicion of superstition or mere sentiment to the other. Then, again, though few know much about such questions as Biblical criticism, what little is known of the Church's timidity towards them heightens the sense of dubiety which attaches to religious propositions not verifiable by experience. And with the general discredit of the authority of the Church, authority and the power of influence have passed to those whose reputation is strong in the practical conduct of life, and so the man in the street takes his cue from the "good fellow" rather than from the good Churchman. His philosophy of life is one in which abstract religious statements and the common metaphors of religious speech mean simply nothing. To the modern mind no general statements unsupported by illustration carry much meaning,

whether they are on religious or other subjects. When, then, we come to present the Gospel to such minds we need to be careful to divest it of its dependence upon systems and forms of thought which are unfamiliar to modern minds, and which the Church has no longer sufficient authority to impose as thought forms for their religious life. It is desperately important that a man should receive his highest thought in the terms and categories which he understands. This point will be of great importance when we come, as we do in the next chapter, to outline the essential message of the Gospel.

For, I would remind the reader that what we have been considering so far is not the full message of the Gospel, but only some of the problems of relating the Gospel to the stock of ideas which is present in the minds of those we wish to win. Our Gospel offers to men a very much fuller, deeper, and richer scheme of life than that which is held by those who now so easily pass it by. But if the presentation of it is to convince them, it must first be just to their present state of mind. It must acknowledge the good in all those good things which their more restricted standards claim to be good. It must not try to cry up the value of the life eternal by depreciating the value of things temporal. It must not decry art and beauty, nor exalt self-purification above social service. It must not call men to a scheme of conduct which is essentially ascetic and self-regarding. All these matters, however, important as they are, lie rather on the circumference than at the centre of the

Gospel. The Gospel is essentially a testimony to certain facts of history and truths of experience the recognition of which has a transforming effect upon human life. These elements of historic fact and eternal truth in the Gospel to which we have to testify, we cannot alter or adapt to fit the changing needs of the passing generations. We can only describe them as matters of experience and leave them to make their own impression. We shall have done all we can to secure them a hearing if we have tried, before describing them, to look at life through the eyes of those to whom our witness is to be given. What this eternal and changeless element in the Gospel is, we shall now try to see, and to state in terms which the modern mind can understand.

CHAPTER III

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER

In this chapter we shall try to present the basal elements of the Gospel; separating them as far as we can from the metaphor and philosophy of particular ages and periods in the Church's history. Doing so, we find the Gospel to consist in these four sets of facts: the fact of Christ, the fact of deliverance from sin, the fact of communion with God, and the fact of the Church. The classification is not rigidly logical and watertight; but it may serve for purposes of exposition without leading to practical confusion.

I. The Fact of Christ

The power of the Gospel lies to-day, as always, in the attractive power of Jesus Christ. It is He, and not our theories about Him, that saves men. We are always saying it, but cannot too vividly realise what we say. Particularly important to-day is this realisation of the supremacy of the Life as seen in the Gospel portrait over the subsequent systems of thought in which men have interpreted what Christ meant to them and to the world; for

to-day the theological interpretation of Christ is peculiarly unconvincing to the average mind. The average person has extraordinarily little capacity for abstract thought of any kind. He has still less capacity for assimilating thought expressed in the terms of an unfamiliar race or of a bygone age : and such is very much of the Church's theology of redemption. The Christian doctrine of redemption is commonly set out in metaphors which are difficult except to those who are interested in the history of thought. Thus, for example, the explanation of redemption in terms of guilt makes use of legal metaphors which are not easily understood by a nation steeped for centuries in the thought of the Fatherhood of God. And the explanation in terms of sacrifice requires some knowledge of the history of the place of sacrifice in primitive religions to make it cogent. Those who are devoted Christians may be glad to wrestle with the difficulties of theology : yet it is not theology but Christ as a living figure who draws men to Himself. Man is so constituted that he can best see what it is worth while to do and to be when the ideal is presented to him in a life. Compared with such a presentation, theology is impotent. And so we have to-day, as ever, to show forth Jesus Christ, the Man of men, the Man of God, as the one supreme figure with whom all men have to reckon.

Some of us would like to preach Christ to men with a clear word as to how He would solve the public problems of the day. We would like to be able to apply His teaching decisively in all directions ; and we think that if it were applied correctly

Christ Himself would stand forth more vividly before men. But systems of Christian ethics are no more convincing than systems of Christian theology. The thought of the centrality of Jesus requires that we put them all into a secondary place. Christ Himself is His own evidence. His own words and actions among the peasantry of Galilee and among the rulers of His people in Jerusalem; these set Him forth in His essential and commanding majesty. Even in His own day, He did not offer solutions for all the problems of the hour—slavery, for example—but He did adopt a characteristic attitude to social questions and social parties, and it is this above all things that men want to see in Him.

It is then Jesus that we need to show forth to-day,—Jesus in His attitude to sickness, to suffering, to poverty, to riches, to cruelty, to intolerance, to entrenched privilege, to hard-heartedness, to hypocrisies and shams, to political parties, to governments, to ecclesiastical pride and national ambition. His words cannot be quoted as though they apply literally to modern conditions of life, but they leave no doubt as to where He stood on all essential social questions. His intense sympathy with suffering, His wrath against all trifling with human need, His hatred of pretence and untruth, His patience with the institutions of His time, coupled with the most fearless and radical criticism of them, His complete confidence in the overthrow of the evil in them, His internationalism in the face of the most bigoted and religious nationalism the world has ever seen; all these things stand out

with vivid clearness. They reveal His spirit and nature in action : there is no need to translate them into social and political maxims for the hour, that would be to detract from their incisive power and not to add to it. To insist on the letter of the truth would be to forget the freedom of the spirit. Each man must make his own application in conduct for himself ; for none can know his fellow or the cluster of circumstances through which he has to cleave his way. It is not for us to dictate to our neighbours what their conduct ought to be ; and when we try to do so, we only induce repulsion and invite debate of details.

We have, then, to preach, not duties, but Jesus as a living embodiment of amazing, rousing, and commanding love, in social situations utterly relevant to ours to-day, challenging every kind of person to awake from complacency and conventionality and play the brother to men. It is not necessary, nor possible, to translate Jesus into a new political code : it is only and supremely essential to see Him through modern eyes. For if we are insensitive to the things which the world to-day values—in its best and most characteristic hours—we shall not see in Jesus, and therefore shall not commend to others the very things about Him which would win their admiration at the outset. We may relieve ourselves of the responsibility for solving all the ethical problems of the day before we dare to preach the Gospel ; but we must be sensitive to these problems or we shall seem to make Jesus irrelevant to the life men have to live.

II. The Fact of Deliverance

Of those who have put on record a vivid experience of the Gospel, most have emphasised the moral revolution which it wrought in them. They entered into the experience of Christ through an experience of their own sinfulness contrasting with His holiness, or of their own incompleteness contrasting with His fulness. A vivid realisation of the moral ideals embodied in Jesus filled them with a sense of their own unworthiness and with a desire to exchange it for His moral excellence There followed an experience in which the burden of their sinfulness and incompleteness passed away, and they were left with a surpassing sense of new joy and energy drawn from Him. For them, undoubtedly, the Christian life began with an experience of forgiveness; but are we therefore to presume that it always should begin with such an experience? Or are we to take more account of the numberless, though less striking instances in Christian biography, and within our own present knowledge, in which the Christian experience began with no such violence of recoil from the past, but rather with a sense of warming attraction towards the Christian offer of a more beautiful, more noble, and more satisfying life? There is at least enough evidence of the variety of the types of experience in which Christ is central to allow us to approach the question as an open one.

The strongest argument for making the presentation of the Gospel turn on this appeal to a violent repentance is a practical one. It might have been

said by the evangelists of an older school that if conversion to Christ is to be wrought in a revival meeting and in an hour, as sometimes it must, it can only be done with the aid of some strong emotional excitement. What more effective from this point of view than a vivid depiction of the evil that is in man? Let him see himself as he is at his worst, in stark contrast with his ideal. The question is not, however, to be judged from the standpoint of "the evangelist," but from the standpoint of youth. If the natural pathway from the current types of paganism to Christian discipleship lies through a strong sense of sin, well and good: by that route we must strive to lead them; but not because the experience of forgiveness has been characteristic of the great revivals of the past. For us the question is, what mental route or process is the right and fitting one for the pilgrims of to-day? We must not prescribe for them an unsuitable gateway into the experience of being a Christian. We must rather describe that experience in terms which will help them to turn their faces in the direction in which they will find an open road.

The Christian experience may be variously described as one of forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, or rebirth. Put in its most simple terms it is an experience of inner harmony replacing a state of inner strife. The precise form which the experience takes will depend upon the outstanding character of the condition which immediately preceded it. If this has been one of moral defeat—say from an ungovernable temper or an ungovernable lust—or if it has been one of impotence to do

the good one would, or of helplessness in face of others' need, entrance into the Christian experience will mean primarily a new access of moral energy, either for defence or attack, for self-purification or for service. The experience will then be thought of most naturally in terms of rebirth and the gift of new life. If, again, the immediate past has been overshadowed by the sense of having incurred the condemnation of God for moral failure, or by a sense of rebellion against the conditions and obligations of life, and revolt against God as their Author, the Christian experience will be felt primarily as one of forgiveness and reconciliation. But if the transition is from a state of aimlessness and futility, and want of a co-ordinating principle to give life unity and purpose, the Christian experience will be rather that of adoption into the service of Christ.

In each case life has been delivered from its inner tension and disorder; but whether the experience of deliverance is thought of primarily in terms of rebirth or reconciliation or of adoption into the service of Christ, it is well to realise that in none of these cases does the *form* of the experience exhaust its content. What happens, for example, in the middle instance given above, is more than forgiveness or reconciliation, which, after all, are only the words which indicate the contrast between the soul's previous sense of guiltiness or enmity toward God and its new state of content and satisfaction. The invariable fact in all these experiences is that whereas, at the one stage, God was felt to be outside our lives and we helpless,

guilty, estranged, or aimless because of that, God is now felt to have become a fact inside our experience. Because of that fact we are now morally energised and delivered from our former fear or hostility toward God, and are enriched by the gift of a purpose large enough to enlist and satisfy our every power. Man has opened the door and God has come in to him. He is known to be one near and available, friendly, and in the position of leadership and control. We have the Son of God for our Friend.

The Gospel consists in the blessed fact of God's will to enter, and man's ability to receive God into his inner life; and we must state it in terms which speak to the condition of our hearers. We need not try to induce in them any particular condition of self-dissatisfaction of which they are not conscious, still less to insist on their experiencing a sense of need which, to them, seems artificial. There is surely in every human life already some need to which the fundamental Christian experience answers. We have to discover the prevailing form of it in our own day, and among whatever class of people we are trying to reach. I have already tried to analyse what I think to be the especial spiritual sensitiveness of the hour. In the light of that analysis, it does not seem possible to insist upon or to expect in young people of the present day any strong sense of guilt or of hostility to God.

The sense of guilt is compounded of two notions: the sense of having grievously offended a binding moral code, and the expectation that penalties will be exacted. Neither of these notions is power-

ful in the common thought of the day. Present modes of thought throw much new light on the responsibility of the individual for his own action. Drunkenness, lust, bad temper, lying, and the rest —to-day are all regarded as being diseases as much as individual faults. At least, the individual is felt to share his responsibility for them rather lavishly with his heredity and his environment. The current analysis may exaggerate the part played in each individual destiny by these other supra-individual factors, but they are real factors of which too little has been made in the past. To require the individual exactly to separate out his own individual responsibility from the wider responsibility of mankind is not desirable if it can be avoided, as I think it can. By all means let us emphasise a man's share in the responsibility for the present and the future, and especially for the next step; but do not let us seek to induce that sense of lonely guilt which was such an outstanding mark of the great Christian experience of the past.

The modern sense of divided responsibility for the past has also a further result. It makes it difficult for the modern person to imagine himself standing as a criminal before a Judge, without detracting from his conception of the kindness and the justice of Almighty God. He will confess himself a rotter and a weakling, but it is another matter to regard himself guilty of the pains of hell. He may be made to feel the terrible possibilities of evil which lie in his nature if they are indulged, but he cannot conceive of God as identified with the principle of condemnation. Christ has taught the

world too well for us to suppose that He will not be for us to the very last. If we are to stress the idea of redemption as deliverance from sin, we must think of sin more often in Paul's thought of it as disastrous and culpable deficiency than in his thought of it as legal guilt. And in so doing we shall speak to the condition of our times. The modern need is typified by the boy who has made a sorry mess of his scoutmastership through thoughtlessness, or the girl who is disabled by her sense of instability and ineffectiveness, rather than by the man or woman pursued by the sense of guilt or of remorse.

So then the characteristic spiritual longing of the world to-day is not so much a longing to be blameless, as a longing to "make good." The spirit yearns less to escape the contamination of material interests and pursuits than to put the impress of its ideals upon the material and social world. And in this aspiration it is nearer the mind of Jesus than it has ever been before, for the religion of Jesus was far less occupied with the aim of self-purification than with the aim of sympathetic service. Jesus never encouraged people to dwell very much upon their past faults, if only they were willing to start out afresh with an adequate life aim and an adequate life motive. And the aim and the motive which He commended might be stated very simply, in some such terms as these. "God is your Father, man is your brother, the world might be very good and beautiful but at present it is very dark and sad. Set about to make life good for your brother, and God will take care of you all, both in this world and

in the next. Your past may have been full of wickedness, yet you may leave it all behind if you will choose me for your Master now. Lose your wrong self in serving your brother as I shall show you how."

And here it is that Jesus touches our deepest sense of need. For the heart of the world stirs to His call to make life good and happy; but it wearies, too, with its sense of failure to achieve its aim. There is a surging passion of hope in the hearts of men that this world might be made into a much more happy and homely place for all men, and not only for those few who are fortunate and able—but the hope is turned to ashes when we contemplate the failure of humanity to realise its dream. Men need Jesus to give them such a will to use the world rightly, as will be corrupted neither by selfishness nor by sensuality, nor dissipated by weariness and disappointment.

Thus the heart hungers for an understanding of the things of the spirit which will not set the rich appreciation of life at variance with the love of God, and for a power to turn the dream of human brotherhood into an actualised social order. Now these two things have been met in Christ—in Christ, though not in Christians generally. Yet, for some at least, the lovely humanity of Jesus has ended the war between the love of human happiness and the love of God: between joy in the world, beautiful with its profusion of gifts of light and colour and gaiety, and joy in the perfect ordering of the spiritual life. This harmonisation of the various hungers of the spirit, this resolution of the

conflict between the lure of the natural and the lure of the spiritual, is part of the experience of multitudes of Christian people. Those who have this experience have a gospel for the present age, and those who have not this experience have not.

And, further, there are those who have, in their own experience, an attitude to their fellows, born of their fellowship with Christ, which makes them sure that the problem of organising the world as a social brotherhood is no vain dream. They can look along the line of their own inner development and see how the will to dominate and despise and exploit others passes away before the desire to understand and serve and equip them. And they can see that the new will to love which is thus born in them is more resourceful, more determined, more constantly energised by deep satisfaction in success, and therefore more potent against difficulties and more resilient after failure, than the old will to fight for one's own hand. And knowing this in some measure by experience in themselves and others, they see that the Kingdom of God canot fail to come, and in this respect also the stress of fear and doubt is resolved in their souls. They are delivered, reborn, released from the thraldom of any desires whose satisfaction ends in themselves alone. The Kingdom of God is within them. They are become the sons of God in that they share the Father's purpose and freely desire to forward it, and in so far as this is so, they have a gospel of redemption for their day.

The witness of the Gospel to man's deliverance

from sin thus takes a special character from the special form of man's present need and aspiration. Our deliverance in Christ is not primarily to be represented as a deliverance from past sins' consequences, nor as the breaking of the power of present temptation to lust or excess: it is still more a deliverance out of a life of loneliness and from a use of the world which ministered to mere pride and selfishness into a life of social service and a use of the world which ministers to the satisfaction of every hunger of an awakened personality. This leads us on to fresh points about the nature of the Christian life.

III. The Fact of Communion with God

We have now to speak of the fact of Communion with God, which constitutes a large element of the Christian witness, appealing as it does to the sense of loneliness, impotence, and futility, which haunts humanity. It is one of the changeless facts of Christian experience that the soul can enjoy such an intimate communion with God as takes away the sense of spiritual loneliness and gives enduring value to the whole of life. One of the features of adolescence is its sense of being on the edge of great experiences and of finding experience constantly dissatisfying, of being called to great achievement and being doomed to feebleness. Communion with God, in little things and in big, is the remedy for this.

In the great classic instances, Christian communion with God takes several leading forms. Now,

it is a re-enforcement in fighting individual temptation; now it is a companionship in making known the Gospel; now it is a sharing of God's Passion to save the world from loss. The Christian witness needs to be more full and emphatic and specific in its testimony, both to the reality and to the range of this experience of contact with God Himself. Moreover, in witnessing to the immature, we must not confine ourselves to the maturer elements in this experience. To what did Jesus call His followers in the first instance? Was it to a life of desperate conflict with the ranked forces of evil? Or was it not rather to a thrilling ministry of social service, to a joyful companionship and a dazzling prospect of signal human success? He taught them to rejoice in the flowers, to steal out into the night for quiet thought, to frequent the wedding feast, to taste life's sweetness with Him and with His followers, to be care-free and adventurous. Without doubt His call to them was from the first a call to an arduous enterprise, but not at all a recondite enterprise, not a campaign whose objects and rewards were obscure, or intangible, or divorced from sense experience and daily life. Nor was the note of sacrifice predominant at the first, though the note of fidelity was always present in His call to men. Only after a considerable experience of His companionship did He ask them to go up to Jerusalem to witness His Passion, and to only a few of them did He reveal the fiercest conflicts of His soul in Gethsemane's Garden. Surely there are many of our younger brothers and sisters to whom we should offer simply Christ's

companionship in the enjoyment of life and the fulfilling of kindly offices of service, and wait long before we ask them to fight His hardest battles.

The warfare of the Kingdom of God demands discipline and evokes heroism ; and we should not hide the fact, but neither should we forget that there are some who find the greater part of their companionship with Him in art and music and the search for truth, in the service of the home, or in the common ministries of human life. These things are by Him touched with new values, new meanings, new emotions. Of course we must summon Christ's disciples always to the work of building up in Christ's name a Kingdom of God upon earth ; but we must offer them communion with God, not only in fighting for ideals against opponents, or in fighting for deliverance from sin, but in building good houses, planting delightful gardens, making beautiful clothes, and in other ways ministering to the joyfulness of life. These things are a part of His Kingdom, and in them we have communion with Him who created all things and delighted to pronounce them good. We must not allow the thought of communion with God to be associated only with moral struggles and Church services, and what is narrowly described as Christian work. We must let it be known that God can be found at the end of every avenue along which the human spirit is impelled to seek an ideal end. The witness of one type of mind cannot be universally convincing, but the cumulative witness of the saints and the seers, the prophets and the apostles, the servants of human welfare, the artists and the truth seekers,

is overwhelming testimony to the reality and range of man's possible communion with God.

Clutton-Brock has argued, in *The Ultimate Belief*, that the activities of the Spirit are not one, nor two, but three. The Spirit is concerned for goodness, for truth and for beauty, and there is an ultimate good to be found in each. They are all equally qualities of God, and the spirit life is incomplete unless it is concerned with them all. Starve any one of them and the others suffer. And to-day especially, because the spiritual desire of man to enjoy beauty and to create beauty is discouraged and denied, the spirit of man is stunted and enfeebled. And especially youth, which needs the romance of the spirit to counterbalance the excitement of the romance of the flesh, is deprived of one of its essential safeguards and kept back from one of its essential goals. We shall return to this subject in a later chapter, but it is important to recognise at once how many avenues of human interest lead up to man's communion with God, and to connect the name of Jesus as much with experiences which move the heart by their beauty as with those which commend themselves to the conscience as right. Only so can we find in our religion the simultaneous satisfaction of all the hungers of the spirit, the fitting climax of all experiences. Religious experience has sometimes been thought of as a separate department of experience not connected with the common experiences of life. We ought rather to find ourselves in communion with God at the apex of every form of experience, in the exercise of every faculty when

we do our best and keenest, in the pursuit of every good purpose when we let ourselves go. At each turn in the road of life we may discover something so good that we can only bow our heads in thankfulness and reverence and say, It is the Lord. If we have known Jesus in His most characteristic moments—in the crowd and in the temple, in the Judgment Hall and on the Cross—we shall find Him beside us also by hillside and lakeside and fireside, and our communion with the highest will be always and altogether in Him.

IV. The Fact of the Church

We pass to consider the fourth great component of the evangelical witness, the fact of the Church. There is offered to man in the fellowship of the disciples of Christ a social experience in which it is made easier for him to cherish his ideals, to fight off his temptations, to strengthen his affection for his fellows, to form habits of service and devotion. By its ordered life of prayer and worship he is helped to certify himself of things unseen, and to acquaint himself with God. The credit of the Church goes up and down as the generations come and go. It is behindhand now in this, and now in that; and there are times, like our own, when the world is out of patience with its slow-changing traditions of thought and speech. And yet, through all, there is preserved in it a treasury of knowledge of the ways in which God speaks to man and man responds to God.

The Church is, in the first place, the centre of

man's worship, his place of communion with God. Incidentally, it is his place of instruction in that moral philosophy of life which his faith in God implies; his school in which to study the fundamental nature of God's universe, the place he holds in it and the conduct befitting his divine sonship. This distinction between man's direct experience of God in worship and his derived ideas of truth and duty is most important at the present time. For it is necessary to emphasise at once the sureness and reality of the experience of God to which men give expression in their public worship, and the inadequacy and incompleteness of the language in which they express their faith. The fact of spiritual energy resident in the Church, the means of grace which it affords, the comfort and support of its fellowship, the inspiration and help of its worship: to these things we need ever to testify as part of the evangelic witness. But that reality of grace and inspiration does not guarantee the rightness or appropriateness of all that the Churches say or do. Like every other long-lived institution, the Church must always tend to fall behind the times in some of its official teaching, and especially in times of change is it hard for the public presentation of the truth to meet the needs of young and old at the same time. Christian doctrine speaks the language of philosophy, and that is a language which is constantly changing and ceasing to carry its old meanings; and Christian morals deal with social relationships which may change their character so entirely in a generation as to make maxims which were once true and vital, seem irrelevant and trite.

It is, therefore, part of the wisdom of those who have to preach the Gospel to remember that the Church is fallible in its thinking and prone in its life and teaching to fall behind the times. Otherwise they may raise expectations which they cannot fulfil, and put upon youth a burden which it cannot bear. Thus, for example, in bringing new recruits into the Christian fellowship to-day, it is well to realise that many of them may not find their spiritual home at all easily in the societies and services of the Church as these are at present organised. It may be necessary to devise new and freer forms of fellowship to meet their needs. These freer forms of Church life are doubtless already coming into existence in the interest of those already within the Church; but the recognition of the needs of those outside might help to bring them into vogue and give them shape and vigour all the more speedily.

One would like to be able to say of the Church, that in its fellowship every spiritual desire will be satisfied and every spiritual gift will be enriched; but one must be content to discriminate between the spiritual gifts which are at present fostered in the life of the Church as it is, and those which only may be. What we may assert without fear of exaggeration is that multitudes of Christian people are brought to Jesus through the worship and fellowship of the Church, in such a way that their sense of God is constantly refreshed; their thought of Him constantly enriched; their desire to be like Him constantly quickened; their insight into right living constantly deepened; and they themselves

brought ever closer and closer into conformity with His spirit. In spite of the inadequacy of the specific teaching they receive, or of the form in which they worship, the spirit of Jesus is for them truly embodied, and to them truly communicated. And of many of those to whom the formal defects are fully obvious, the same is true; the spirit triumphs over the letter because it was the spirit which first gave the letter life. Christ is Himself effectively present for them. The divine-human fellowship is experienced by them in quickening power because they do indeed share God's purpose and not merely profess His name; it is the more potent exactly in proportion as they share imaginatively and explicitly, as well as silently and symbolically, in the furtherance of His purpose, and learn to know it in all its breadth and range.

So much we can emphatically claim on behalf of the fellowship of the Christian Church; but at the same time we are bound to acknowledge that in some respects the Churches tend to quench the Spirit of Christ in those whom they influence, because they fail to identify themselves fully and clearly with His social programme. And so it comes to pass that there is a spirit in the world to-day, outside the Churches, in some ways more responsive to the call of Christ than the spirit embodied in our present Christian institutions. It is a spirit quickened indeed by influences which Christ has wielded both within and without the Church, expressing itself here and there in other movements while as yet it is not fully embodied in the organised life of the Church. Until it finds its

adequate expression within the Church, the full power of the witness of the Christian fellowship cannot be felt, because the characteristic longing of this generation for spiritual fellowship will remain unsatisfied. In the Church, in the past, our fathers in different ages strove to relate the Person of Christ to their conceptions of Justice and Government and Providence and to their hope of the hereafter, because that was the direction in which their spirits craved for a truer understanding of life; they succeeded, and were satisfied. So also in its turn the present generation longs to relate the Person of Christ to its conceptions of human personality and progress, to discover in Him the power and the way to transform the social life of the world, and to read the whole movement of history in the light He has shed on life's ideals and purposes. Youth especially is moved by this aspiration, and needs help in Christian fellowship in order to relate it to the Person of Christ. To those who believe in the divine calling of the Church, and perceive this, it is simply inevitable that the Churches will presently awaken to this need and meet it; but we are bound at the same time to recognise that whilst their failure to do so continues, it must greatly diminish the power of their appeal.

This, however, raises problems which would take us beyond the scope of the present chapter, and are best left alone till a later point in the book. It will be well, before we look any further at these questions of Church organisation, that we should try to envisage the Christian conception of life,

endeavouring to see our ordinary social interests and activities in the light which Jesus throws upon them. It is probable that the point of contact between the Gospel and many modern minds will be the view of life for which the Gospel stands. Such questions as those of the relation of business standards to Christian standards, and of the place and value of play in the world must be answered as Jesus would be likely to answer them before the upshot of the invitation to be a Christian can be fairly understood. Silence regarding them can but endorse the widespread, though quite erroneous, impression that Christianity must be kept as far as possible from modern business, and the Christian kept equally far from many of the amusements he would otherwise most naturally choose. To these matters we now therefore turn.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF WORK

In this and the next chapter we shall attempt to sketch in bare outline a Christian conception of Life, the object being to bring the fundamental ideas of Christianity into touch with the common problems and interests of work-a-day folk. If we deal with life under the two comprehensive headings of work and leisure, we shall not need to leave out much that matters; though the treatment can only be exceedingly summary in the space available. All that is possible is a mention of some outstanding points in the common conception of life that raise a barrier to the understanding of the Christian conception, and thus prevent the acceptance of the Gospel. For example, if it be thought that business life is bound to be lived on a lower plane than that required by the teaching of Jesus, the door of many minds is shut at once against Christianity. Or, again, if play be thought of as essentially a frivolous matter from the spiritual standpoint, youth is set at once in opposition to the things of the spirit. We shall expound the Christian conception of life no more than is necessary to counter views like these which inhibit the understanding and acceptance of the Gospel at the outset: not attempting a treatment full enough to supply working

guidance for Christian conduct in special cases. We want a view of work and play which satisfies the instincts of the Christian as right and good, whilst at the same time it satisfies the instincts of the practical man as sound and practical.

Of the two subjects, work and leisure, leisure might seem to be the more suitable to begin with, as being the more interesting of the two for the majority, and, therefore, the best point of contact for the discussion of life's values ; but the uses of leisure are so bound up with the results of work that it will be better to consider first the Christian conception of work.

Let us begin by asserting roundly that Christ would have the business life of every man made as truly God's business as was His own, when He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business ?" In all his working life, a clerk or artisan is to seek first the Kingdom of God, just as surely and truly as is a missionary or hospital nurse. The line is still drawn firmly between the sacred and the secular in popular thought, in spite of all the rhetoric of Christian preachers—and it will continue to be so drawn until it is erased from the chart of life just at the point where it is drawn between business and religion. To bring this to pass we must take our stand firmly on the ground that those who are ministering truly to the welfare of human life on its material side are doing work which is as essential to the Kingdom of God upon earth as that of those who are ministering directly to men's minds and spirits. This view is based upon the manifest concern of Jesus Himself for the

welfare of the material life, His ministry to the needs of the human body, His conjunction of physical and spiritual well-being in His own action. From this alone we can be confident that all work which is truly adding to the fulness and wholesomeness of human life on its physical side is work for the Kingdom, having its own intrinsic value on the spiritual plane.

We are thus led on to ground where innumerable questions may arise as to the particular value of this or that method or product of business life to the real welfare of the world—material and spiritual. We can attempt no more than to lay down broad principles without application except in very few points by way of illustration. What we are looking for is a set of standards which will judge whether a given line of business action is right and good, at once from a practical and from a religious standpoint. We are trying to judge all work by the standard of its intrinsic worth to human life,—not separating the physical from the spiritual,—reinforcing our common practical standards by the absolute standards of religion. Doing so we shall find at least the following five points of general importance, the first two relating to the work in itself and the rest concerning the relations between the persons involved in the work.

I. The Standards of Good Work

In the first place, *the work of a Christian must have real social usefulness*, directly or indirectly, and he must be persuaded that it has, and find inspiration

for energetic and efficient effort in so thinking. "What are you doing?" said a visitor to a man working in a stoneyard in New York. "Earning five dollars a day," was the reply. "What are you doing?" said the visitor to the next man in the stoneyard. "Making these stones square," was the reply. "What are you doing?" said the visitor to the third man. "Helping to build a cathedral," said he. Each man of the three was doing all these things, but different things were uppermost in their minds. In a Christian conception of work the prominent thing will be the quality of the service rendered, the value that some one shall find in the thing that is being done.

Such an idea of service is easier in some trades than in others. Those who grow food, make clothes, build houses, should easily take hold of it. In many cases processes are so divided that some imagination is needed to realise the service rendered. Yet a man who only tacks on the sole of a boot must realise that it is to the making of boots he is contributing, and there can be few processes in which it would not be possible to discover the value of the thing made. Workers on railways and telegraph systems may and do feel the essential value of their work. Rough work like that of mining and scavenging inspires the same sense of public service in some people. But makers of beer and dispensers of spirits may have to ask themselves whether the good or the evil predominates in the use to which they minister. Brokers who encourage their clients to trade in "margins," organisers of public gambles and lotteries, and all procurers for

the baser passions of men will hardly attempt to justify their occupations by the criterion of public usefulness.

There are, of course, many things which a worker may be asked to do which directly diminish the value of his services to the public. It helps no one to saturate skins with water before they are weighed for sale. It is humiliating to be engaged in adulterating useful goods or crying up the value of poor ones. The tricks of trade will raise in many a man's mind difficult questions as to where he should draw the line or how far his responsibility runs. This is not the place to propound typical cases for conscientious decision. But things will never be rightly decided unless there is first in each man's mind a positive ideal of service, so that he will not tolerate giving his life to work which is not, on the whole, of real and substantial public benefit.

In the second place, *the work of a Christian man should be a medium for his true self-expression and a source of joy to him.* He must put into his work as much of himself as the nature of his work allows, and in doing so he will find joy in it. If there is in it any opening whatever for the exercise of intelligence, artistry, distinction of touch or creative originality of any kind, he must take advantage of it. His nature being spiritual, he ought to be discontented to do anything that does not admit some real expression of his intelligence and his goodwill. At the least he can work with concentration, zest, and energy; and though the routine and repetition character of much modern industry makes any real originality difficult, yet there is more room

for this than many suppose, and it is essential to seize all the opportunities there are. Only by doing so can the work of the world be lifted to a spiritual plane. When work is done without keenness, character suffers. It is deteriorating to slack; for it robs the slacker both of his own personal vigour, and of his sense of doing his best for his fellows. If (as is alleged) the conditions of modern industry make it unsportsmanlike for some of the best workers to work as fast as they easily can, lest they set a pace which their fellows cannot follow, the permanent remedy for it cannot be mere slacking, for that reduces both the worker's vitality and the world's material and moral wealth.

There are, of course, a host of trivial and monotonous occupations in industry and business into which it is not easy to put a great deal of personality. But it may yet be possible to put a little. We must not overlook the possibility of putting skill and care and spiritual feeling into the doing of the simplest acts. There is opportunity enough for a real expression of character in the handwriting in which ledgers are kept, in the finish with which a nail is driven home, in the cleaning and tidying of a home. Few people can have occupations which call out their capacities to the full, or duties which do not irk and cramp them at some points. Few, on the other hand, can have occupations to which they cannot bring some standard and some finish beyond what is demanded in their bond, and it is this that makes their work an expression of the spirit and an offering to the glory of God.

Along such lines it becomes possible to find in work of the most prosaic kind a source of real joy. Many have testified to the entire change which has come over them when they have found a new mental adjustment to their work, affecting their attitude of spirit toward it. Without any change in the work, some change in themselves has turned it from a weariness of the flesh to a delightful game; and even when the work remains in itself uncongenial, it may be possible to find in it an opportunity to perfect some gift of patience or perseverance or ingenuity which one wishes to acquire and can learn to regard as worth the pain and trouble of the process by which it is gained. Certain it is that a very great deal of the discomfort and distress which many now feel in their work would pass away if they could turn themselves about and take a different view of it. Certain also is it that many have found in their religion a means of so turning themselves about as to find pleasure in drudgery of every kind.*

It is indeed an essential quality of the Christian life that it should find pleasure in all that it does. The creative joy that is felt by all true craftsmen in work well done, whether the work be manual or mental, is easy enough to understand. In it a man positively shares the joy of God the Creator: he is indeed continuing the Creator's work and his joy is the sign and seal of it. There is also an imported joy when uncongenial tasks are done for some one else's sake—for the service of the city or the maintenance of "weans and wife." If there is not a way

* Cf. the well-known tract *Blessed be Drudgery*.

of looking at a job that enables one to throw oneself into it with some satisfying purpose, then one should, if a Christian, take steps to get out of it. For joy is the mark of the Christian life. Clear witness to the possibility of enjoying humdrum routine is a thing which the world needs greatly, and some give it with good effect. There are many who would be a long step nearer to believing in Christianity if they could only have as their working companions people who had learned to enjoy their work. Only by the contagion of such examples will the world be won for Christianity and qualified to depend less upon the present hateful spur of mere competition to call forth its labour. And in proportion as this happens, the conditions of work will themselves be changed and made more favourable to the expression of creative joy.

II. The Personal Relations Work brings

Turning now from the work itself to the relations in which it places us to other people, we have to notice, firstly, the opportunity work affords for personal contact with individuals. The Christian principle here is plain and well understood. *To all our fellow-workers we are bound as Christians to be brotherly.* We are bound to be interested in them, to cultivate their society, to enter into their interests, to protect them if they need protection, socially or morally. We must share with them anything we possess and value that can be shared, and especially should we share with them an attitude to our work which is invigorating, energising, inspiring, and

conducive to the religious life. In a word, we have to be good fellows to our fellow workers, and that in spite of all the difficulties which incompatibilities of temperament and ideal will produce. To the non-religious this will not seem possible unless they are temperamentally sociable ; but the Gospel offers a new nature to those who accept it, a nature full of the spirit and temper of goodwill, together with a constantly renewed supply of spiritual energy to restore again the frayed edges of good temper when it has been ragged and torn. Constancy and cheerfulness are recognised to be the staple ingredients of good fellowship without which it can hardly maintain its name and reputation.

In some working environments, it is something to be able to bear the shocks and buffets of social intercourse without loss of temper. But an active goodwill would go further than that and work constructively to build up a happier and more healthy social life. For this end testimony is borne to the value of cultivating social fellowship with one's work-fellows in leisure hours : it humanises working relationships, and engenders readier sympathies. Another duty of goodwill is the protection, wherever opportunities offer, of those who are morally weak against those who are morally corrupting, a duty which may arise in numberless instances in office and factory life, in such matters as sweepstakes, enforced drinking, and undesirable conversation.

It belongs also to the duty of Christian goodwill to take a hand in trade-union activities, seeing that these are the accepted constitutional means of

working for better conditions in industry, and one's duty to make one's neighbour's life as satisfying as possible cannot be fulfilled if this means of influence is neglected. Each of us is called to try to improve the conditions under which our fellows work, if they are ill-considered or unsatisfactory; the quality of the work they are expected to do, if it is degrading; the pay they receive, if it is unjust. We are our brother's keepers to see that they are not put under too great a strain, either physical, mental, or moral; to guard the weak and undeveloped against too great fatigue or monotony in their work, or against work so mechanical that it contains no educative element, or so shoddy and second-rate in type that it is positively demoralizing; against a social environment which is morally corroding. This responsibility need not turn a Christian into a busybody or a prig, though sometimes it has done so. We are not, in the first instance, called to press our moral and religious principles upon the attention of other people, though there may be times when it would be weak and cowardly not to express them. Undoubtedly, however, the first duty is to function happily in the social life of one's work-fellows.

In the next place, through our work, we are all personally related, not only with our immediate work-fellows, but with a vast unknown public who benefit, or it may be suffer, from our labour. *To this wider public also we are bound as Christians always to behave as good neighbours.* We have a duty to them which is not fulfilled by simple subservience to the law of the market. We have to

manifest our intelligent control of the blind machinery of supply and demand, by a direct exercise of goodwill in deciding how far we are willing to benefit individually, or as a trade group, by the ups and downs of commercial fortune. In this both those who hold positions of control in industry and commerce, and those who occupy subordinate posts, will no doubt be confronted with many challenging conditions. For instance, one realises that there are endless complexities in the finance of big businesses which make all moral principles difficult to apply. But this at least can be said with confidence, that the problem of the right distribution of wealth will not be solved till Christian men and women will always regard themselves as being in friendly partnership with the public, from whom they will be no more desirous of taking the lion's share of the benefit of their work than they would of making a corner in fruit at a banquet. This refusal to regard any persons whose lives we touch indirectly as other than friends is essential to our acquiring the spirit which will inspire the solution of our own part of the social problem. The principle of service will also put a limit upon the amount that any man with a social conscience will wish to take as the reward for his own work. He will look sharply at high profits, and values due to the adventitious advantages of monopoly. He will not wish to create a situation in which his profit is secured by the ruin of other men, and will do much to avoid such contingencies.

And, lastly, *we are bound as Christians to work*

towards the transformation of our present industrial processes and business arrangements. We want to create a more Christian system, so conducted that the co-operation of man with man which it entails is friendly and congenial and helpful to all concerned. We want methods of work and organisation that are better calculated to exercise and develop the many-sided personalities which they employ, more stimulating to the joy of work and to the friendliness of fellow workers, and more successful in distributing the wealth of the world widely to all who can benefit by it. This is the last and hardest part of the task of fellowship in the world of work.

We are not forgetting the difficulties of realising this ideal. Beyond the basal difficulty of wresting all we want from nature, there is the difficulty of overcoming the conflict of interests which arise between man and man. These difficulties as we know have given rise to traditional inequalities, traditional injustices, traditional feuds between rival groups in the community. There are all kinds of sources of misunderstanding and conflict both in the control of industry and the distribution of its gains. The organisation of industry and commerce cannot be exactly what it would be if every one were industrious and every one as eager for the rights of others as for his own. Industry would not be inspired, it would only be exploded, if productivity and discipline were sacrificed to a sentimental and doctrinaire view of the way in which we should treat one another. An employer who has to consider his markets has only to a very small extent

a free hand in fixing the conditions which he offers to his employees, and they in their turn must be governed in their dealings with him, not only by the personal goodwill they may feel towards him, but by the loyalties they owe to their fellow workers in their own and other trades. We should not for one moment minimise the difficulties of the position. Few people of goodwill will be able to realise anything like their ideal of fellowship in their dealings with one another in the business world, or in the professional world.

And yet the necessary condition of loyalty to a Christian ideal of life is a wholehearted attempt to put all business relations on to a footing of real goodwill, of mutual understanding, of friendly give and take,—a sharing in the benefits and responsibilities of the common enterprise, approximating more and more toward equality as better and better means are found for developing the capacities of all involved. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God means in commerce and industry, that fellowship is placed in the forefront of a man's practical business aims. And so far as a man is responsive to this ideal, he becomes a co-worker with God and a vehicle of the Spirit in the world process by which God is evolving a social commonwealth upon the earth. He will have "experience" of God in the progressive discovery of himself as a means by which the Spirit of God brings increasing goodness into the working world. The higher a man estimates the openness of his own personality to the influence of the Spirit of God, the more will he be impelled to encourage and expect his fellows

to respond to higher motives and appeals to their better qualities. He will believe so deeply in the fundamental qualities of human nature, that he will reckon it a shame not to give men and women everywhere a chance to develop from being merely machines, kept at work by fear of starving, into free persons working from interest in their work and the will to do their best with the rest. He will keep before him always the practical hope that both the methods and the motives of the working world can be made more worthy of human personality and of God's offer to inspire men to co-operate happily. He will be prepared to work hard for that hope and risk a great deal at times to give effect to it, trusting a man sometimes for more than he has yet proved himself worth, continuing to do good work though some one else exploits it, sacrificing profits rather than let honourable principles go by the board. And in all this he will not be governed by the conventional standards of the time, or worried by the letter of even the Christian law, but will let the Spirit of Christ lead him where it will.

III. The Crux of the Business

And here we face an almost overwhelming difficulty. It is the fact that many find themselves engaged in work which seems intrinsically so futile, so repressive, so monotonous, so bound up with malpractice, so unfriendly toward competitors, or so embittered by the sense of injustice or exploitation suffered by themselves, that it is difficult for them to regard all this idealism as anything but

airy nonsense. We are brought here to a problem which can only be resolved by Christ. We are up against the inherent evil of this present life, and the problem of the vexation and pain and defeat which are an inevitable part of it, and we have to seek the attitude of Jesus to all this evil and learn to adopt it. Attempting to do so we find these two principles which go down to the very heart of Christianity, and which apply directly to our problem.

First of all, we have to recognise, as Jesus recognised, that for the time being at least, evil and suffering are here, and we have got to accept them and bear them whilst at the same time we lay hold of other elements in our experience which justify us in believing that the supreme and ultimate fact of life is God's love and Fatherhood. The great life, and in the end, the happy life, is the life which takes up its share, and more than its share, of this pain and sorrow, refusing to be embittered by it. This attitude to life is peculiarly that of Christ, and it is only from Him that we can acquire it.

On this view, work, even hard monotonous and wearing work, with its conditions of fixity and inexorable necessity, is not due entirely to the selfishness of employers and possessors, or to the particular cussedness of the present economic and industrial system under which we work. The main difficulty is at any rate partly due to the hard facts of nature. When all is done that can be done to prevent the oppression and exploitation of the weak, there will still be much that is wearing and hard and monotonous that cannot be eliminated

from life. There will still be much that must be borne. And apparently this is part of God's ordering. Nature is beautiful enough and generous enough, but it has elements of intractability and ugliness that test our wills and our ideals to the uttermost. It may be that they are there in order that the struggle with them shall make man finer and nobler. At any rate, they are there, and it would seem that Jesus quietly accepted them as part of the unalterable factors of experience in which we must simply acquiesce. His own acquiescence in these stern conditions of life led to no kind of fatalism nor any steeling of the heart toward sufferers, as we well know. But it remains a fact that Jesus, who knew so much of the trouble of the world and did so much to alleviate its suffering, never seemed oppressed by its existence.

We have an inkling here of the Christian's proper attitude to those hard facts of experience which will remain while human skill and goodwill are doing their best for the amelioration of the conditions of working life. Are we as Christians to resent these permanent irreducible hard conditions, or such of them as we cannot in our own time change? Or shall we accept them as, here and now, if not ultimately and ideally, God's goodwill, in which we may find our chance of peace and salvation? Is not this side of things included in Jesus' idea of the daily cross, which seems so integral a thing in His experience and in the experience He foretold for His disciples? The thought can be misrepresented, and misunderstood, but we ignore what is true in it at our peril. Truth is truth, and

Jesus surely saw things in truer proportion than we in our impatience are likely to do. Reconciliation with the world, as God's training-ground for us, He seems to regard as a vital part of our reconciliation to God. As such it is tremendously important, both for our peace of mind and for our effectiveness.

And, secondly, when this reconciliation with our experience is effected on Jesus' lines, the result is not, as has been said, a stoical indifference to evil or passive sufferance of it. If we take the attitude of Jesus, we do not find ourselves inclined, as it were, to take evil lying down. On the contrary, we find ourselves in a position of new power over our circumstances. Having escaped from the captivity of our spirits, we often (though not always) discover that we can escape also from the captivity to circumstances which gave rise to our spiritual bondage. It is probably required of many people to-day that, watching patiently for opportunities, and then venturing largely on their faith in God, they should refuse to acquiesce in their circumstances. They should have faith either to change the conditions of their work, or to change their work itself. Few people nowadays have a really effective choice of occupation in their youth, though possibly there should be many more who seriously question in adult life whether or not they should go on with it.

It is not a mere counsel of perfection to say that unless we can serve God's purposes in our jobs we should get out of them. In many situations we may not be able to work as well and serviceably as we might do if we could re-make the world of industry to-morrow, and yet find opportunities which it

would be foolish or cowardly to abandon. We may know, if we will, whether or not we can continue in such situations with the sense of God's personal commission to us to do so. And if we decide that we ought to continue where we are, though many things in our business life may still seem incongruous with the Spirit of Christ we may proceed with patience to eliminate them, and even make temporary concessions to circumstances without compromising our inmost souls. If this be compromise, Jesus compromised with Roman Imperialism and the institution of slavery, in that He was content to work within the system of life which they established without directly attacking them, doing so surely because there were other knots in the social and moral life of the world which it was more urgent that He should cut or disentangle. But if this be not compromise, it leaves our spiritual energies unimpaired and our hearts whole to work by collective action, along both voluntary and political lines, to eliminate from industry evils which our isolated individual effort cannot touch. Thereby we may have the spiritual satisfaction of knowing that though our lives are given to work which is not ideal in all its features, we are all the time exerting ourselves to keep the boat-head of industry and commerce facing in the right direction, and ready to seize our opportunity for gaining here a foot and there a yard.

We have now sketched briefly a conception of work related closely to the actual conditions of daily life, but yet shot through with the great life principles of Jesus. It offers to every man engaged

in the world of business, a way of life in which Christ in all things sets the standard, and for which He also offers the motive power. If a man would set his hand to his work along these lines, he would not only be living what William James called "a significant life," however inconspicuous and subordinate its place in the whole scheme of things, he might be living all the day in communion with Jesus in his work; and his failures when they came, would only drive him back more resolutely upon Jesus again. The watchwords for such a life are the watchwords of good service, good workmanship, and good fellowship.

Along these lines lives busied with material production and bound to the wheel of organised specialisation, in shops and offices, would yet be charged with spiritual ideals, and directly fruitful in the service of the Kingdom of God. In detail the sketch may make mistakes and leave unanswered questions, but in broad outline it can hardly be questioned that here is a way of life which brings the appeal of Christ close home to the working life of the ordinary man. It calls him to repent, if in anything his life is devoted to useless purposes, if it is careless of quality, if it is mainly self-seeking, or if it is embittered by irritation or spite. It promises him increasing satisfaction in the development of his own personality for the service of others, and an increasing share in the transformation of the social machinery of the world through the magic talisman of goodwill—not indeed easily or without effort and failure, but assuredly and blessedly, on the honour of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF LEISURE

If work needed a spiritual interpretation, much more so does leisure. Work has been treated by moralists at least with seriousness, though not always with spiritual sensitiveness; but leisure is a no-man's land in the world's thinking. To many, leisure seems the sporting ground of all the devils that duty and religion have to fear. The great devils that destroy the moral foundations of life and the little devils that filch away its finer fruits—they are all supposed to find their opportunity when the day's work is done. The arch-devils love the black darkness of midnight, but the little devils are all over us as soon as it is dark in winter and in summer long before the sun has set. And the little devils at least have been allowed their right of way in the leisure hours of the world, because no one has claimed those hours for the fairies and the sprites. When religious people have made inroads upon leisure and claimed it for their uses, they have been apt to come with too heavy a tread and so drive away the fairies. They have not always recognised the spiritual value of high spirits and lightheartedness, and so have asked the world to make its leisure too laborious. They have come with an air too solemn, a philosophy too dark for the

occasions of festivity, and have sometimes unwittingly disheartened the attempts of men to shake off the fetters which work so easily fastens upon men's spirits. They have done so because they lacked a spiritual conception of the place of play in life. Not having a complete philosophy of leisure to offer, their philosophy of life has been prejudged by this defect and disregarded, and the world has gone on its way to enjoy its leisure according to its own unguided judgment—letting the little devils have their fling.

I. The Obvious Uses of Leisure

Some of the uses of leisure are, of course, well enough understood. No one questions the need of rest for minds which have been over-concentrated, and for bodies which have been over-strained. The value of physical exercise, relaxation, and change of occupation are not doubted. On the physical side, at least, we know where we are: the righteous, and even the over-righteous, join with the rest of the world in acclaiming these ends as necessary and right. So far, so good, but it does not take us far enough. It is not enough that our leisure hours should be occupied in re-equipping mind and body for their daily tasks. Leisure should be used for wider purposes—for ends less tightly tied to the wheels of work, and more delightful in themselves.

In our present social order, leisure is particularly needed to provide compensation for the unsatisfactoriness of working life, to ease faculties which have been cramped and give scope to tastes which

have been repressed in working hours. It is unfortunately true, as we have said already, that working life does seriously cramp and starve the natures of very many. Modern industrial organisation depends upon a degree of specialisation in work which uses up one set of the worker's faculties at the expense of the rest. Our work is geared up to the driving wheels of competition and mass production. The pace is set for those who need to be kept at it, lest they grow slack, and the standard of work is set to the abilities of the less alert. Hence work, as we know it, tends to dull the mind, and blunt the taste, and fret the temper of those who are not spiritually forearmed against these deadening tendencies. We surely should not permanently acquiesce in the degree of restriction which working life now imposes on many, but meantime the restriction exists and we have to meet its evil consequences. Leisure should therefore make possible, by compensation, a right recovery of the balance of human nature so upset, and a right rebound from the compulsion and cramping narrowness of work. It should afford the opportunity for our giving free expression to that creative deeper self which our working conditions have repressed.

Hence the rebound of the majority, in their leisure, into activities which give rein to their desire for easy fellowship, excitement, colour, light, and gaiety. But for certain elements in the work-a-day environment of average people the rebound would probably be instinctively wise, since our natures know a good deal naturally of the best and quickest way to the restoration of their normal

health. Under the provocation of office and factory routine human nature will, however, react sometimes into forms of play which confirm rather than correct the evil bias given to it by work. The rebound may then result in corrupting or weakening excess. Naturally, a depraved taste may sometimes crave for the wrong food, in games as well as in victuals. Just as the victim of alcoholic habits craves for more alcohol, so do the victims of noisy factories and mind-deadening occupations crave for rowdyism and mental idleness in their play. But both the physical and the mental appetite can be persuaded to accept well-chosen alternatives. The worse the depravity, however, the better chosen must be the alternative—and in this matter of leisure we must, above all things, remember that play to be play must be pleasurable. It must not be too difficult, too much bound by rules, too much like work in its demands for patience and restraint, too much under authority and tutelage. If this be kept in mind the rebound which must come from the cramping conditions of working life may be so directed that it satisfies unsatisfied cravings, educates undeveloped faculties, and in every way enlarges human personality and increases the joy and energy of life. There are known games and enjoyments adapted to most needs, and the right kind of compensation may generally be found in pleasurable forms.

Hence spring the need for guiding principles of play and the duty of religious people to understand and apply them. Some well-meaning folk are impatient because youth in general has too little

taste for Bible-classes and improving lectures. They would be surprised if they were told that this is a pathological condition of mind needing rather to be humoured than to be scolded, and due in some cases to the working conditions they themselves have helped to impose upon youth. But thus it is, and therefore leisure must be filled, up to a point at least, with truly congenial and delightful play, appealing to the craving for light and colour, amusement and entertainment, and the easy give and take of irresponsible companionship. Forms of play can be devised which will satisfy all these initial requirements, and yet exercise the spirit in the right directions, and it is congenial to the happy spirit of Christ to devise them, and a primary duty of Christians to do so. But first we need to see what spiritual education and enrichment play is ideally capable of achieving. We pass, then, to consider some of the higher uses of leisure.

II. The Higher Uses of Leisure

Still keeping clearly in mind the idea that play must be pleasurable, it is possible to suggest that it may minister directly to many of the higher interests of the spirit. Especially should it be of use in stirring up the spiritual appetites which exist in human nature for the giving of pleasure, for seeing life as a whole, for wider knowledge, for the appreciation of beauty, for some kind of artistic self-expression, and for the enjoyment of good comradeship. I will speak of all these things in turn.

1. *Of the giving of pleasure* there is no need to say very much. It is one of the disadvantages of modern methods of *work* that they make it so hard for the imagination to picture the uses to which work ministers. And this deprives the workers of one of the great incentives to effort, one of the great natural sources of spiritual nourishment. There is in every one a hunger of the spirit to render personal service to others, to see the pleasure it gives, and to reap the immediate reward of gratitude. In so far as this hunger is starved in work, it should be fed in play. The fun in all good games is the fun of the whole game shared by all, and not the fun which each gets out of his own performance. The sense of doing other people good is not in the foreground: but the joy of each depends none the less upon the joy of all, and it is the reaction between pleasure felt and pleasure given which raises the pitch of pleasure to its proper height. In young people, especially, the joy of service, perhaps more often than not, should take the form of pleasure shared among equals rather than help given to the needy. If we want to avoid self-consciousness in service, this is the form of service to encourage, as through sharing games it can be encouraged. The appeal of service most fitted to win an entrance into the heart of youth and capture a share of youth's leisure for the expression of brotherhood is surely to be found just here. If it begins here lustily, it will not stop here; for the giving of pleasure begets the desire to give still more, and in the end strengthens the will to give when the giving is not pleasant but rather costly.

And we shall not make the mistake of divorcing the one kind of giving from the other. We do not of course suggest that the playing of games inevitably begets a generous and disinterested spirit. On the contrary, we bear it in mind that the desire to enjoy oneself has the other tendency also—the tendency to selfishness. We all know the tennis player who has no use for any opponent who cannot give him an equal game; and we have heard of golf-widows and the like. The ideal of unselfishness needs therefore to be made explicit whenever ideals of play are presented. But this it is quite possible to do. Indeed, a large ideal of unselfishness might well be erected with play as the material it works in, and builds with. Why may we not translate the ideal of human brotherhood into terms of play? Why not give youth as part of its religious ideal the aim of making good games universally possible in every rank of society? Why not attempt to break down all social barriers by extending across them the fraternity of good sport? It might be that the aim of obliterating all social barriers and sharing the freedom of the world of play with members of every rank of society would go a long way to give the idea of the Kingdom of God upon earth a hold upon youth's imagination. Leagues of Nations to overthrow war, and brave endeavours to eliminate industrial strife are things for youth to dream about and manhood to achieve, but the expression of brotherhood in a League of Play—why should not youth set out to achieve it to-morrow? Here is one facet at least of the Christian ideal of brotherhood, one part of the Christian use of leisure.

2. It is sometimes doubted whether the spiritual *hunger for knowledge and the desire to see life as a whole* are universal or even general. Indeed, it is commonly supposed that the taste for "education" is a rare one, and those who most feel the praiseworthiness of learning most often despair of making it popular. And yet surely there is in most people so deep and urgent a need of seeing life in perspective that once it is met suitably, the need is confessed and clamant. Granted that it is not generally satisfied by schemes of education and systems of philosophy, nevertheless it exists, and its existence accounts for much of the aimlessness and restlessness which drive many to sensationalism in their use of leisure. This need for a philosophy of life is proved by the emotional satisfaction which comes when it is found. Indeed, no human being can have peace of mind till he can see his life aims clearly envisaged and harmonised. We may grant that the taste for a logical scheme of life is not universal, and yet assert the existence of a real and genuine craving to see life as a whole—as a thing of parts and proportions, each having its values, and together satisfying an instinctive demand for unity.

Setting aside the desire for technical equipment for one's job—which is not a leisure appetite at all, but only a tentacle stretched out from work to steal from leisure's golden hours—the desire for knowledge certainly is not popular. But then, how dull is the diet of knowledge usually offered, how little calculated to whet a jaded appetite! The learned, and those who offer instruction, are apt to set too low a value upon facts and incidents, and much too

high a value upon theories and systems of ideas. There are those whose nature is satisfied with that particular type of intellectual fare, but they are a minority. They are a most useful section of the community, for they have many of the innate capacities for leadership. Moreover, their needs are far too little regarded by the Churches' bid for the leisure time of their adherents. For the sake of this minority there is need for systematic teaching of no low grade, covering a wide field of subjects, and showing how Christianity interprets and unifies the whole world of living beings.* But in the case of the majority, the hunger of the spirit for a philosophy of life must rather be met by a diet of separate stories and pictures and songs in which life's values are shown in action and not described and correlated in cross-section.

If, then, leisure is to minister widely to youth's need for a true vision of life that makes its moral principles attractive and sets them all aglow, and if youth's stagnant intellectual hunger is to be stirred to activity, adapted means of education must be found. The particular method of education which seems to offer the greatest hope of meeting the need of the moment is education which includes a right appeal to the dramatic sense. Along this line of approach it does seem possible to open up to many the all but closed world of music, literature, and art. Till they have

* See on this subject the report, entitled *The Church as a School of Christian Education.* Price one shilling from the Young People's Department of the Congregational Union, Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, E.C.

seen life as an ideal, and as a whole, dramatically, the majority are hardly likely to want, or to be able to profit by, the intellectual presentation of its satisfying wholeness which appeals to the few.

3. And here some other of the different purposes of leisure already named come into view. Among these is *the use of leisure to satisfy the spirit's demand for beauty, and provide it with some congenial form of spiritual self-expression.* In the arts of drama and music, and to a lesser extent the arts of speech and song, we most of us can find our opportunity for spiritual self-expression and for beauty. In the chapter which follows I shall deal particularly with the spiritual appeal of beauty. Here I will only anticipate that treatment by suggesting that worship is hardly possible to those who do not exercise the æsthetic side of their personalities, whilst the pursuit of ideals is hardly possible to those who do not first make their ideals real to themselves in the realm of the imagination. We can only worship if we have learned to contemplate and admire. We can only live well when goodness and nobility have fired our souls. And if the practice of admiring goodness and discriminating between better and best is to be acquired, is there any more favourable medium for acquiring it than through a well-considered appeal to the dramatic sense? All the arts have in them the possibility of educating the spirit, but the dramatic art has an advantage over the others in its power to combine them all. More will be said on this matter before the chapter closes, meantime, one other of the uses of leisure claims our notice.

III. Comradeship in Leisure

4. A final feature of the value of leisure to the life of the spirit is the opportunity which it affords for comradeship and for *education in comradeship*. As compared with work it brings us more into association with people of temperaments congenial to our own. We are thus enabled to learn, in an easier medium, to exercise our faculty for friendship. It is therefore important to work out the meaning and demands of fellowship in terms of *play*. Having laid it down as a principle that the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ means not the repudiation of play, or its fearfully guarded use, but the expression in real hilarity of the spirit of joy which Christ exemplified and enjoined, and having thus enlisted play as an ally, instead of alienating it as a rival, we may go on to lay down positive demands.

Thus we can urge that those games should be cultivated which develop the team spirit, and the sporting attitude to difficult tasks and personal injuries,—not, for example, endorsing the Hindu boy essayist's impression of football as a bad game, "because if your opponent injures you in the game you cannot sue him at law!" We can insist that play should run into channels which will cause it, whilst remaining play, to minister to the joys of others. We can plead for those forms of recreation which taken together will minister to every side of our nature, including, for example, the intellectual and artistic sides. We can ask that youth will put its recreations under restraint when they tend to spoil the sport of others, as in fast motor cycling, and to

forego altogether the forms of play which lead their friends into temptation, as certain forms of dancing tempt some to exhaust or over-stimulate themselves.

In these ways we can make the spirit of play a handmaid to the spirit of human love and friendship. And if we do this we can show, on a large canvas and in bright colours that all comradeship, even the comradeship which is engendered in the byways of pleasure, is comradeship which can be governed by ideals of the spirit. Our friendships will always be second-rate and liable to corruption, unless they are friendships in the pursuit of things worth while in themselves; friendships indeed in the quest of ideals. Friendship in play thus comes to be an integral part of the Christian ideal of life so soon as we realise that there is in Christianity a spiritual ideal of hilarity and an obligation to find ever more and more satisfying expressions of beauty and joy.

And when the spiritual basis of play has been thus affirmed we reach a conception of comradeship that makes it not difficult to forearm youth against the temptation to sacrifice the joys of the spirit to the joys of the flesh in the wonderfully alluring relations of sex. Let it be understood that all our instincts for sense delight are in themselves natural, pure, and capable of yielding divine beauty and satisfaction. But let it also be made clear as the condition of this that we remember always that we and our friends are spiritual persons with many-sided natures to satisfy, and eternity in which to find our complete fulfilment, so that we must not spoil the good gifts God has given us by carelessness

of their proper use and limitation, or haste and greediness in seizing more than is right. The full fine flavour of joy is only possible to us if in our pleasures we remember always God and our fellows. If we do this our impulses for enjoyment will be directed into channels where each will have its best result, for they will have ceased to war with one another.

Granted this ideal of leisure we may take the instincts of young people for play and comradeship as we find them, and train them to a Christian expression in organised social groups. And this we should do rather than set before them a picture of leisure, staidly and usefully employed, which we call Christian, and ask them to accept as part of the yoke of Christ. The Boy Scout and Girl Guide Movements illustrate the value of associating boys and girls in social units which live together a life of many-sided interest. This life may be made so attractive in its variety of common occupations that it is worth while for the individual to obey its rules and live for its honour, and so the first principles of self-surrender to the larger social unit are acquired. The idea ought surely to be carried further by the formation of many other types of group, and especially those adapted to older adolescents and young men and women. The aim in each would be that common interests should lead to common forms of happy, natural, self-expression, tending always increasingly towards ideals of service; though the companionship would not be founded exclusively upon these ideals. The movements already spoken of would seem to show that

if you can associate boys and girls for the purpose of doing things which it is a pleasure to do, and keep uppermost all the time the idea that one must play the game with one's fellows, the life of the group tends naturally to help its members to be their best at work and play. With older groups it should not be difficult to lead on to the idea of mutual responsibility in moral struggles—and teach that each must help his neighbours where he can. The Regnal League has shown how strong a comradeship can be based upon such loyalties as these.

It is, of course, vital that all such groups should have their true psychological unity. In the late adolescent and junior adult periods of life, the make-believe, adventure interest, which forms the psychological basis of the Scout and Guide Movement, has to give way to something different. Perhaps the instinct for drama and dance is the key to the psychological basis for the social grouping of adolescence. Both these throw boys and girls together and so afford the opportunity for an education in a fellowship which is no longer the unisexual affair of earlier life. Here comes the opportunity to unfold ideals of fellowship in which the sense appeal of the physical is made the friend, and not, as it may otherwise become, the foe, of a bigger spiritual purpose. Fellowship in leisure is thus associated first with the more primitive unmoralised instincts for sense delight, and afterwards with the attempt to give delightful expression (as in drama) to developed moral ideals. From that it would be natural to lead on by stages to forms

of social or political service adapted to maturer groups, or to some harder educational activity which they would take on for the sake of their further equipment and fuller intercourse, or to some sort of inter-class fellowship which would help to counteract the class isolation of working life. Provided the more elementary social instincts and constructive energies of the group have been enlisted first, this does not seem an unlikely or unnatural process.

IV. Leisure and the Church

If these things are true they bear closely on the work of the Church. If games and music, literature and the drama, no less than Bible-classes and prayer-meetings, can be made into the antechambers of religion, the whole handling of leisure by some Churches should undergo a change. In the main, it seems, the Churches have divorced intellectual culture from æsthetic culture, valuing the former as "spiritual" and deprecating the other as "sensuous." And while games and enjoyments have been encouraged in the Church's programme, they have been valued chiefly for their indirect importance—as harmless occupations for those who might otherwise be worse employed; or as a means of discharging surplus energies which might otherwise be hard to control; or even as baits to the unwilling, or coating for the religious pill. They have not been regarded as spiritual activities befitting the leisure of mankind in general and youth in particular, and so capable of providing the

medium for a progressive education in the things of the spirit.

But if, as we think, the natural form of spiritual expression, for youth especially, is in a many-sided comradeship in play, it is the Church's business in some way or other to foster the comradeship of good play, regarding it as one of its most important points of contact with those not yet ready for all that it has to teach them. By psychological and spiritual necessity people make demands upon religion according to their experience of life, and since young people are in the main preoccupied with the light side of life, the demand they make upon religion is for enjoyment without alloy. Granted that the deepest things in religion only come home to the soul when it has tasted the bitter things in life, to demand such depth of the young is to ask them to be old before their time. Hence the one irreplaceable point of contact of the Church with youth is in the provision of facilities for the natural expression of their high spirits, their comradeship, and their love of beauty.

Whether the Church can use these means of spiritual education and make them into real "means of grace" will depend upon its regarding these play activities as spiritual ends in themselves—however partial and incomplete—and not mere means to other spiritual ends from which they are distinct in essence. The physical, social, and æsthetic activities of young people are to be regarded as an integral part, though not the whole, of their true spiritual expression. Since they are a part of the spiritual life, they should be claimed as such;

and since they are only a part they should not be isolated from the other, deeper, and fuller expressions of the spirit. And, for that to be the case, Christianity needs in some way to be recognised as the foster-mother of pure play. This means that Christian leaders should promote and guide the leisure activities of young people,—though whether provision should be made separately for each individual Church, or group of Churches, or whether it should be for the community of youth in general may be an open question. But in either case the leadership should be as far as possible in Christian hands, in order to ensure that ends which are partial shall be attained under the guidance of minds which see them in the true perspective of human life as a whole.

Out of such true comradeship in the appropriate spiritual interests of youth, there should naturally spring (without any "forcing" and under steady but unobtrusive leadership) the desire for further self-fulfilment, and in particular for service and abandonment to the highest. And this natural awakening of deeper desires, whenever it may occur, will provide the true spiritual opportunity for an appeal for dedication to the fuller and more inclusive ideals of life. But such development will not be natural unless the leadership provided by the Church is of those who are as sensitive to the spiritual values of play as they are to those of service, work, and worship. A good response will be not only natural, but probable, if the leadership in leisure is thus supplied by those who are sensitive to spiritual values of all degrees. And when youth does awaken in this way to the wider and deeper

purposes of life, and to the more strenuous tasks of the Church, its loyalty to them will be all the stronger as it reflects that the Church has all the time been guiding its life and comradeship along a true and satisfying line.

The question of the precise relation of the Church as an institution to the recreative life of the community lies outside the province of this book. Some have proposed that it should be a part of the united evangelistic activity of the Churches to provide recreative clubs in sufficient variety and numbers to meet the needs of all. Others might wish to let the recreative life around them develop under non-religious auspices, trusting to the influence of individuals inspired by the Churches to throw in their lot with it and use it as a means of moral and spiritual education. Others, again, will feel unable to attempt to influence more than the recreative life of their own immediate adherents. The matter is one for discussion and experiment. But in any case we must be prepared to allow great freedom to youth—to choose and direct its own course, and at the same time trust to the spiritual influence of those whose religion makes them good fellows, convinced sportsmen and genuine artists, to see that though many things are done which are inartistic and immature, an upward spiritual tendency is felt through the whole. Without attempting to settle this question of official relationship, I return in conclusion to examine in more detail the potentialities for spiritual education of a form of recreation already frequently referred to, namely the dramatic form.

V. The Spiritual Potentialities of Drama

The dramatic method has recently been gaining considerable prominence as a means of general education. This point, among others, is of interest to us, but it is not our chief point. It is with the drama as a means of expressing the Christian spirit and ideal and of illustrating the beauty of the Christian motive and practice, and thus of stimulating the Christian will and emotions that we are specially concerned. In other words, we approach the subject from the standpoint of the Christian Gospel, and not merely from the standpoint of moral culture.

Of the value of the dramatic method for kindling imagination and arousing emotion, we need say little. Educators are suggesting that in some form or other it is the supreme method for presenting moral ideas, and that it is only by associating literature and music and the arts of representation with big moral ideas that you can fire the minds of boys and girls with enthusiasm for goodness, truth, and beauty. This point of view is argued with good effect by Dr. Hayward and Arnold Freeman in *The Spiritual Foundations of Reconstruction*. This book contains examples of the way in which the principle may be applied in schools to the dramatic presentation of the achievements of great ideals. Thus, for example, Democracy, The League of Nations, Shakespeare, and the Apostle Paul, are successively made the subject of these "Celebrations," as they are called. More of these examples are given in Dr. Hayward's volume of

School Celebrations, whilst the more general application of the same ideas is made in Arnold Freeman's *Education through Settlements*.

These writers argue that the establishment of such new celebrations as Empire Day (1907), St. David's Day (1915), Shakespeare Day (1916), marks not only a new departure in education, but is an admission that the ideas with which these celebrations are concerned were not in fact being taught effectively in Scripture lessons, or by other forms of class instruction. The same failure is implied in the demand that is made by various societies for special teaching to be given regarding, for example, temperance, gambling, thrift, peace, eugenics, kindness to animals, etc. The writers, indeed, affirm that the right attitude to such subjects cannot be taught by the ordinary school methods. It is not so much to be learned as imbibed. What is needful, and what is aimed at in their proposal, is that great moral ideas should not be "mere ideas," cold, verbal, and isolated, but that they should come into the mind with a certain momentum or background, with a certain massiveness and atmosphere. They ask, therefore, that the class teaching of the Bible, of literature, of music, history, and certain other subjects, should be largely abolished in favour of a liturgical, ceremonial, or celebrational treatment, which they hold to be more emotionally effective than mere instruction. Incidentally they hold that "great art" would bridge the gap between the traditional and ineffective methods of the Church when it invades the School with its religious instruction, and the bare and unimpressive proposals of the secularist.

Dramatic work calls for consideration first because of its value to the performers. For them it is an exercise in memory work, in promptitude, in accurate observation, in self-subordination to a purpose, in good team work. This in itself is a good deal. There is also training in the power to put oneself in another's place, and see things from another's point of view; and since identification is essential to true sympathy with others, drama may thus have a big contribution to make to religious training. But there is still more than that. There is æsthetic as well as moral training—the training in the beauty of the fitting phrase or gesture, the telling costume, or general scenic effect; the training in appreciation of emotional emphasis and restraint. Emerson has declared that when the æsthetic sense is debased, the moral sense is usually debased also, and William McDougall also in his *Social Psychology* asserts that the æsthetic appreciation of fine character is a necessary part of its appeal. If these things are so, it would seem that the religious sense of many has been cut from some of its roots by their lack of æsthetic education.

Moreover, a good play should have the same value for intelligent and attentive spectators on the one hand as for efficient and conscientious performers on the other. The performers are consciously, corporately, and actively striving to bring out the meaning of the play. The spectators are endeavouring to appreciate, though more passively, that same central idea, and emotionally to share in it; and thus players and spectators are united in a fellowship of thought and emotion. Christianity

lends itself to such dramatic treatment since it appeared as a life lived before it became a set of ideas preached. It is a way of life—the incarnation of a divine spirit. It is, therefore, in its very quality dramatic, and can only be adequately expressed in the action of life, that is drama. It is best recommended by being shown and seen. Undoubtedly, if an idea can be expressed in dramatic form it will both secure a much bigger audience and make a much deeper impression than if it is presented in abstract terms in lecture, book, or sermon. The question is how far the specific Christian message can be presented dramatically. Would it be possible, for example, to hold a dramatic evangelistic mission ? If it would, it would incidentally enable at least twice as many people as now to take part in public evangelism. We have Oberammergau and the Bethlehem Tableaux to suggest possibilities.

In the Middle Ages, plays were written by priests and acted by their flock in their Churches. The drama was a normal and recognised vehicle of Christian teaching and culture. It was used to illustrate Christian character—to show sins and virtues in action and consequence both in this world and the next. The dramatists at length resented the limitations imposed on their art by the narrow range of subjects provided by the Church and the Bible, and interested themselves with the wider range provided by the common life about them and the historical records to which they had recourse. The breakaway from ecclesiastical control was all to the good, but that is no

reason why drama should not return to those themes which once it portrayed so effectively to the uneducated population of Tudor and Elizabethan England. At the same time there are plenty of modern plays which have made a success in the ordinary theatre to prove to us the possibility of expressing high ideals and Christian motives through the drama without its being fettered to the older themes.

One great objection to the whole procedure is, of course, the traditional and still, in some circles, fairly widespread prejudice among the older folk who carry on the work of the Church against dramatic activity of every kind. They fear that we may simply encourage interest in a side of life which usually tends to frivolity or worse, because its associations are bad and its development un-ideal. There are, however, some who think that the alleged prejudice against the drama in the Churches is exaggerated, and that the suspicion of the old-fashioned would soon be dispelled by the production of a few artistic Christian plays. Meantime, all over the country, churches are going in for dramatic art, though, unfortunately, for want of guiding principles, most of them are doing silly farces, vulgar and poor in every way. Nor is the trouble confined to this country alone; only this week there comes to my hand a cry of distress from a Christian community in Madagascar embarrassed by the dramatic propensities of its young people, and without a clue to their wise direction. Even where the dramatic method is held to be good in itself, the suspicion lingers that it may not be right

to use it for the expression of the best and deepest things in life. This perhaps points to a special development of the dramatic method for Church purposes, and it may be that Pageantry and the "Celebrations" already referred to show the way to this. In the Celebrations, music, painting, literature, recitation, and song are all made use of; but very little action is employed. Such adaptations of the drama may prove, if not the goal of Christian dramatics, a useful half-way house.

The chief difficulty felt at the moment by those who take a positive view of the spiritual possibilities of the drama, is the dearth of plays that are suitable. There is not much that is at the same time good enough and simple enough for amateur performers. The Adult School Movement, 30, Bloomsbury Street, W.C., publishes a setting of Tolstoy's *Where Love is, God is.* There are a number of missionary plays and some mediaeval mystery plays available, but there are those who think that it would be a pity to cramp a modern Christian drama with ancient conventionalities, that the Church has already suffered too much from the tyranny of mediaevalism, and that there is no need to revert to the crudeness of the miracle and morality plays for our material, the modern theatre having already presented us with a more suitable instrument for the purposes of a Christian dramatic art, in the work of modern serious dramatists like Jerome and Drinkwater, Galsworthy and Bernard Shaw. Of this material Drinkwater's *Cromwell* and *Lincoln* are highly praised by those who have used them for Church purposes, but there are proprietary

rights which may not be infringed. The adaptation of some standard novels is also suggested, and *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* may possibly be commended in spite of its sentimentality and obtrusive preachiness. From the point of view of evangelism, the most urgent need is for plays that will present the great Christian ideals and demands. Galsworthy, it is thought, leaves out "Redemption." Shaw leaves out "The Cross." Drinkwater comes nearest, but he leaves out the Church! These men can write plays that preach on "The wages of sin is death," or "Be sure your sin will find you out," but something is wanted that will grip the soul where they leave off. Mediaeval mystery plays are not satisfactory for this purpose, for they leave a sense of unreality that only confirms indecision; and plays in which Bible narratives are presented have, as a rule, a similar defect. We still await the production of plays which embody the full gospel appeal.

We have, meantime, a little testimony to the revolutionary spiritual effect of such plays as we have, and it is probable that much more could be gathered. There can be little doubt that thousands of young people in this country owe their interest in the missionary enterprise primarily to their part in some dramatic representation. The study of the life and character of Livingstone by those who were asked to personate him has, for example, marked a spiritual crisis in more lives than one, and the same may be said of the dramatic representation of the story of *The Mayflower*. In many instances some piece of service rendered in such

dramatic performances has been the first introduction to the wider service of the Church. The work of the Guild of Missionary Players and similar bodies has in like manner done much to arouse the interest of still larger bodies of spectators.* In the view of those who have watched this matter most closely, the method could be applied more widely and for the most direct and personal of religious appeals. The method which has been found so useful in generating interest in foreign missions and church history, might also be used in wise hands, as an evangelistic means of winning men to a personal faith in the Gospel of Christ.†

* Information about Missionary Plays can be obtained from the Missionary Societies' Headquarters; whilst information of a more general kind might be sought from The Educational Settlements Association, 30, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.

† The St. Martin's Players, of St. Martin's Church, Trafalgar Square, have produced, I am told, a Pageant of the Spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER VI

BEAUTY AND THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

In the sketch just given of the Christian conception of life, we have had to keep always in view three quite distinct, though closely interwoven, sets of relationships. Whether it be in Work or in Leisure, the Christian has to perfect his relations with God, with his fellows, and with the material world. The Christian religion is peculiar among all religions in the close connection it maintains between the first and second groups of these relations: to love God and not love our neighbour is for Christianity unthinkable; to show love to our neighbour is, says Jesus, to show love to Him. That is a Christian commonplace no one denies; and though few do justice to it, elaboration of the point would serve no useful purpose. It is merely necessary to reaffirm it before passing on to another point, complementary to this, and not to be taken as diminishing its importance, viz., the connection between our relations with God and our relations with the material world. This, too, is of primary importance, whether for work or leisure, and our neglect of it may account for a good deal of our failure to perfect our other relations with God and man.

The average Christian who takes his religion seriously is apt to have not very much religious enthusiasm for perfecting the relations of his business life. He may take these relations quite "religiously" as we say, meaning painstakingly, and may try to fulfil them honourably; but his pulse does not beat high with the thought of what he may be able to accomplish for Christ in that sphere. Whilst he will be ardent about the success of his favourite missionary society, or the progress of his Church, or the response of his Sunday scholars to his teaching, his thoughts are cold and grey when they turn to business. Though there may be countless exceptions, this is probably the rule. But why is this? Is it not because in business the Christian thinks he is in a world of material values, and it is only the spiritual values which are really interesting? He does not really think you can sell tea or cotton to the glory of God.

So, too, the average Christian who is earnest and self-sacrificing may enjoy good music and fine pictures, but he has doubts whether, for instance, his enjoyment of good music ranks equal in spirituality with his enjoyment of, say, good sermons. The art and play side of life are necessary to the weakness of mortal flesh, which cannot sustain a high note for long at a time. They refresh the body and the brain, but they are more likely to entangle the spirit than to edify it. Many may think this statement grossly exaggerated, and yet they will probably find that enjoyment and religion stand in the minds of the vast multitude of their fellow countrymen as either opposed or indifferent

to one another ; and that the typical attitude of the spokesmen of religion to such things as artists and theatres is well calculated to create this popular impression. Spirit and matter are conceived as being normally at war.

To me it is simply unthinkable that industry will be dominated by the Spirit of Christ until Christian people come to believe that the handling of material things is meant to be sacramental—everywhere and always—and that in every action and transaction in commerce and manufacture, just as in every jest and every sport, whilst there is a way of doing the thing that is just soporific to the spirit, and a way that may be actually poisonous, there is certainly a way that is strictly and literally to the glory of God. Nor is it credible that our social life will become friendly till social employments and enjoyments are all valued as spiritual ends in themselves. "Whether you eat or whether you drink," says the Apostle, "or whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God." And, if you please, the glory of God is not to be manifested simply by a wise moderation in eating and drinking, but by a true appreciation. God's glory is to be found in good victuals, not only because they are useful, but because they are delightful. God's bounty is declared in the enjoyment which He has added to what might otherwise be the tedious occupation of bodily nourishment. Some one once expressed surprise to the poet Tennyson on witnessing his delight in a meal of roast beef and boiled potatoes. "All fine-natured men," was his reply, "know what is good to eat."

The truth is that the life of the senses is either sacramental or it is sensual, and if it is sensual, it is not simply indifferent from the point of view of religion, but positively degrading. Unless we discern the glory of God in eating and drinking, in working and playing, we eat and drink damnation to ourselves. We work and play ourselves into the hands of the Devil, we become the bondservants of sordid and cloying sense. And men do this daily, in offices and factories, and in theatres and music halls, while all the time they might in the same places, and in much the same occupations, be scaling the ascent of heaven.

I. The Eternal Significance of Beauty

How closely intertwined are the spiritual and the material we may see if we consider the imagery which religion employs. Christ is the Bread of Life. The Church is His Body. The Spirit comes to man as water to wash away his sins, fire to burn up his dross, and flame to light his candle. Much also of the language of religion is the language of love, which again is a language based upon physical attractions and emotions, within which the things of the spirit are discerned. It is not without significance that the Church has been able to use for its own adoration of Christ some of the sensuous imagery of Solomon's Song of Love. What is all this but the recognition that all men's sense experiences are full of suggestions of an inner meaning. Whilst he savours them with his physical senses, his spirit is fed also with some feast of meaning

which transcends the world of sense. The purpose of life is to discern these spiritual values in the material world, and in the end to lay hold of them so firmly that they are known and remembered when their sense origin has been forgotten. Once stored in memory they can be recaptured without the original sense stimulus ; but the fact that they all have their roots in the material world should never be forgotten.

Now what there is in things which gives them this higher value, it is difficult to tell. But it is no less certain that there is in scents and scenes and sounds some witchery that sets the spirit afire. Training is needed to perceive these finer meanings, and discipline and repose are needed to appreciate them ; just as restraint and insight are needed by the artist or musician who produces them. The name we have for this quality of spiritual appeal is beauty ; but what beauty is no man can say. It is a sort of overplus in the value of things, an overtone in the music of life, which transports the spirit out of itself, and out of its immediate surroundings. It is the up-welling of the joy which inheres in all the created works of God and the awakening of a kindred joy in those who appreciate them. The ultimate attitude of the spirit to beauty is therefore one of self-forgetting worship. This self-forgetfulness is as much as to say " Here is something for which it is worth while letting oneself go, and losing oneself. Here is something that is absolutely worth while." And after all that is very much akin to what the spirit says when it is made aware of the presence of God ; for just as the

vision of God will heighten a man's sense of natural beauty, so the sense of beauty will make him sensitive to the call of God for his spirit's devotion.

How near these things lie together is illustrated again by our use of the word "grace." When a man's physical bearing or his moral behaviour reaches a certain degree of finish, of charm, of beauty; we speak of their grace. Now, grace is the word which we attach pre-eminently to that quality of the life of Jesus which makes us long to be like Him, and it is also the word we use to express that overflowing bounty of God which produces in man incalculable inflows of spiritual life. We have but to awake to the beauty of things, and to believe that life is meant for the discovery and reproduction of beauty, because God is like that, and from every corner of the world where beauty lurks, spiritual life and energy come flooding in to our souls.

"If any man would compel you to go with him one mile, go with him twain," said Jesus, in one of those packed sentences into which He compressed a whole philosophy of life and religion. In other words, live for the overplus, the overflow, the superfluous. Pay twenty shillings in the pound, says morality, and you shall be a respected citizen of this world. To enter the Kingdom of Heaven, says religion, you must abandon this worldly arithmetic and give back always something more than you are asked or paid for; and that overplus will somehow be in the coinage of beauty. There is no joy in the morality of the market-place, no joy in exchange which does not over-pay both sides, no joy in making

things merely to serve their mundane purpose. Joy comes when a finer finish, an added touch of warmth or colour is given to our speakings or to our doings—for the sake of love and beauty.

What a great deal of meaning also is packed into that story of the alabaster box of ointment which a woman took and broke over Jesus' feet! Why this waste, said the disciples, considering how it might have been used for the relief of the poor? It was Judas who said this in the narrative, because he kept the bag and was a thief; but there have been many another since who was not a Judas, whom the incident has puzzled. Why this expenditure on cathedrals and organs and flowers when there is lack of bread for the poor to eat? The answer that man does not live by bread alone is meant to dethrone all merely utilitarian argument. There is a certain point at which luxuries become more important than necessities: what is then wanted more than physical nourishment is some sort of spiritual enravishment. Life needs its full supply of the experiences which make its senses thrill: and youth needs them in abundance. As Clutton-Brock has urged,* one reason why the sex romance of adolescence exerts such an overwhelming power over the youth of this country is that it is the only romance they know. Their experience of the linking of spirit and sense in acts of romantic abandonment is confined to this one instance, whereas their lives should be full of the rapturous spiritual enjoyment of the things of sense.

* In *The Ultimate Belief*.

Just how the immediate experience of beauty in Nature and Art is related to the conscious personal experience of God is not easy to define. It is significant that the experience of God cannot entirely express itself till it has made use of beauty. It needs beauty of phrase and tone to convey it to others. Prayer tends naturally towards poetic expression; it seems not only to demand richness of phrase, but also to create its own rhythms. It is not only the Anglican priest who intones the prayers he uses in the congregation; in the Free Church prayer-meeting the extempore prayer of the uneducated layman often becomes a kind of rhythmic chant. Strike out all the poetry and the melody which religion has created for its service, forbid the impassioned rhetoric of the preacher, or the pregnant symbolism of the religious rite, and should we not make our denuded testimony impotent and false? It is hard, indeed, to convey our meaning to those to whom we speak of God unless they have authentic experiences whereby to interpret the only language in which God can be adequately described—the language of beauty.

The experience of beauty is thus at least an avenue to the experience of God, and an outcome of it: is it that experience itself? Surely it is an experience of God Himself. It is an apprehension of the spiritual goodness which lies behind and inter-penetrates the material world. Granted that the beauty we acclaim is really beautiful, the recognition of its beauty is as much a discernment of God as is the recognition of, say, a noble act that has its source in Him.

It is God's glory that is revealed to us whenever we find in any action or any experience something so good that it sends our spirits soaring. Whether it be the blue of a gentian, or the sound of a breeze, or the passing of light over a cornfield, or a lithe human figure, or a clean stroke in tennis, a gracious salutation, or an heroic act—if it carries us out of ourselves in wonder, or gratitude, or the desire to share our joy, we have heard God's voice. All beauty has indeed its source in Him, just as truth and goodness have. They are distinct and complementary revelations of the one perfection, so that if we recognise any of these things for what it is, we are at least entering upon an experience of God.

How full and satisfying such an experience will be must always depend upon the degree to which the spirit has made itself familiar with God in other experiences. To know God is more than to have a few isolated experiences of Him. To know God is to have a whole network of experiences through each of which some knowledge of Him has been borne in upon the spirit through the senses, and whose occurrence has made us aware of a Reality, a Presence, a Person from whom they come. Till we have learnt to ascribe some element in all our experiences to a Father, we can hardly be said to know God as Christians in any of them. And when we have found God present in that way in life, no isolated experience of His works will satisfy us unless we can consciously recognise Him in and through it.

There are, indeed, some who are at present

sensitive only to truth, or to beauty, or to moral right, and their character tends to be cold or dreamy or hard accordingly. There may be some who will never be sensitive to the beauty of nature till their æsthetic sense has been aroused by such a moral experience as the experience of forgiveness. There are some, again, who are sensitive to a divine appeal in beauty who yet have not related this voice of the divine to the voice of God they hear in conscience —and their natures are distracted and enfeebled because it is so. And there are others who have felt the experience of nature's beauty as a positive pain because of their lack of faith in the goodness of God's purpose for mankind. They have no vision of beauty in the divine ordering of human life, no glimpse of the satisfying perfection of the social purpose of God, and hence their experience of beauty is as the sound of a voice that mocks the passion of desire which it arouses in their souls. To them the experience of beauty is not as yet the experience of finding God: but maybe it is part of the experience of God seeking them; the foretaste of an experience of a God who is truly amazing and wonderful, but still terrible because still untrusted and unknown. The experience of beauty as an experience of God is only fully possible to those who in some way or other have experienced "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Hence, and in spite of all Christian Philistines, the tremendous stimulus which Christianity has given in history to the appreciation of nature and to every form of art.

II. The Present Neglect of Beauty

At the present day, however, beauty is at a discount in the world, and morality and religion are both impoverished in consequence. Whereas the aim and sum of all morality should be to bring mankind to appreciate and to share whatever in life is in any sense lovely, morality has usually concerned itself exclusively with that which is narrowly useful. Thereby it is given two unrelated functions, one being to supply the material necessities of the world, and the other to minister to its moral health. Thus the moralist divorced from the artist loses sight of the middle section of human duty which should unite the two, the ministry to the world's hunger for pure enjoyment and delight. Now, when this supremely important segment of life is forgotten, religion is reduced to a hard utilitarian morality. It is so at the present day, when the idea of religion is far too frequently associated with the horsehair and oatmeal porridge idea of morality, and consequently is rejected. Indeed, most men have actually come to think that it is frivolous and idle to spend more time in communion with God than is strictly necessary to keep them in the paths of virtue. We think that we must put so much energy into being good that in this wicked world we have none to spare for being merely religious. From this delusion we need to be delivered by a refreshment of our sense of æsthetic values. We must practise art for its own sake and play for the sheer joy of it, or we shall lose our sense of the right of religion to

be cultivated except for its moral utility, and refuse to practise communion with God unless morally it pays.

I have already suggested that no unqualified certificate of religious approval can be given to everything which claims to be artistic. It is possible to mistake the grotesque for the beautiful and appreciate that which we ought rather to spurn. There are true and false values in æsthetic feeling. There are æsthetic experiences which are in themselves essentially diabolical, disintegrating to personality, destructive of the soul. They interpret and rejoice in that which is essentially sinister and evil. They apprehend, express, and communicate not the good which is at the heart of reality, but the evil which is bound up with it in this mixed stage of being through which our souls pass for their education. And that means that Christian education in æsthetic values is of supreme importance. As we judge æsthetic values, so we are likely to judge moral and spiritual values. There is a curious parallelism between the spheres of goodness, truth, and beauty, so that although they are distinct and separate spheres there is a sort of congruity between what is good and bad in each. The same terms can thus be used in criticism of a picture, a song, a book, a religion, a character. And it is certainly true that if we tolerate ugliness or lack of discipline, coarseness, heaviness, or self-indulgence in art and play, these will recur in religion and conduct. If we are content with what is cheap and pretty and easy in art, we shall be content with what is superficial and taking in conduct. If we are content

with what is merely sugary in music we shall incline to the sentimental in religion.*

Another conclusion may now be added to those already set down regarding the Christian conception of work.† Carrying the idea of the duty of good workmanship only a point further we may now say that all work should aim not only at finish and distinction, but ultimately at some real beauty. It is not worthy of men and women to whom God has given the capacity for creating and enjoying beauty that it should be so little exercised in their work and in their working surroundings. It is not realised how seriously the neglect of beauty starves the spiritual nature of man, reacts unfavourably upon his morality, and drains away his energy. Particularly to-day, when so much human power is put into manufacture, the importance of beauty needs emphasis. The cult of utility at the expense of beauty is a direct blow at the ideal and spiritual interests in life. It is a dangerous denial of the spiritual purpose of the material world. It relegates the spiritual too much to leisure time, making it an extra, and probably a luxury. It is therefore needful that we do something to recover our standards of beauty in the production of articles of use of every kind—clothes, houses, furniture, streets, and public buildings ; everything indeed on

* This is the motive behind the present-day attempt to reform Church music and, especially, hymn music. The Church Music Society and many prominent musicians are identified with it, and the new standards can be discerned in such productions as *The English Church Hymnal, In Hoc Signo,* etc., while the hymn-singing festivals conducted in various places are attempting to popularise the movement.

† In Chapter IV.

which our minds tend to rest. By beauty we do not, of course, mean mere prettiness, still less mere ornament. Decorative effects are often gained at the expense of beauty, and there is beauty often enough in things which are severely plain: the absolutely fitting thing is of itself beautiful. But beauty must be sought sometimes for its own sake, and not obtained always and only as a by-product.

We have, therefore, deliberately to fight the ugliness and the racket and clamour of much of the working life of to-day, on the ground that God loves quiet and beauty. And because God loves finish and delicacy in work, we must try to achieve these qualities in our individual efforts and make their pursuit more possible in the collective life of industry and commerce, to the utmost of our power. If it is indeed true that we *may* "experience" God in the experience of beauty and the joy of successfully beautiful achievement, then as religious people we are bound to do so, and to make it possible for others to do so wherever we can. The thought of what we may thereby achieve is brought out in less prosaic language in the following poem by John Drinkwater :—

If all the carts were painted gay
And all the streets swept clean,
And all the children came to play
By hollyhocks, with green
Grasses to grow between;

If all the houses looked as though
Some heart were in their stones,
If all the people that we know
Were dressed in scarlet gowns,
With feathers in their crowns;

I think this gaiety would make
A spiritual land,
I think that holiness would take
This laughter by the hand,
Till both should understand.

We grant fully, however, the extreme difficulty of realising any high standard of beauty in the modern world of manufacture and business—demoralised as it is both ethically and æsthetically, because it is keyed up too hard to the note of utility. Hence the enormous importance of using play for the establishment of right scales of æsthetic value, so as to make the taste for beauty pure and strong enough to tell. In some amusements we may find an appeal to self-indulgence and selfishness, and an expression of the spirit of vanity and derision of all that is good that are nothing short of diabolical. While others will embody and express a spirit of hilarity wholly attuned to the clear and happy harmonies of the Gospel. A lesson of the greatest importance in morals and religion may be taught when boys and girls are given the opportunity to experience the latter. To give such opportunities to-day is a magnificent service, both because of the ardour and energy which the youth of to-day has available for its games, and because of the great variety of good games and fine shows now available.

In gauging the importance of this matter, we are bound to remember how little scope the living conditions of so many give them either for the enjoyment of beauty or for the creation of it. As we have said already, throughout the vigorous hours of the best of their days, a great many people

are making things which are significant of no generous thought or beautiful emotion. They go home to surroundings which speak of little or no divine loveliness, either inside their homes or outside them. Despite the morally and spiritually depressing tendencies of these occupations and surroundings, they do indeed manage to preserve and cultivate much beauty of feeling and action in their dealings with each other, and in their devotion to God; but how much more exuberant and lavish would be their exercise of virtue, how much more completely attuned to goodness would be their spirits, if they could but enter more fully and deeply into the true experiences of worth and goodness in their play!

At the present day there is in the world so great a craving for beauty that not to satisfy it would be to do an almost irreparable injury to the spiritual life of the world. Particularly are the young seized and shaken by it. Experienced teachers tell how great a change has come over their pupils in this respect within a couple of decades. It may be that it is in this direction particularly that the modern spirit is hungry for God: and if this be so, beauty must be one of the serious pursuits of the present age, or religion will wither away. For the world to-day, it is strictly and soberly speaking a choice between the pursuit of beauty and the decay of religion, a choice between Art and Atheism. We must learn better to attend to the marvels which God is daily showing in the fields and in the sky, and to the beauty He has printed on the faces and on the deeds of men, or we shall miss some part

of the essential evidence of His Presence in our life, and deny ourselves some sources of peace and strength and gladness upon which we might otherwise be drawing to meet the strain and fret of our days. Equally, too, must we learn to emulate our God in the production and multiplication of beauty, or we shall not sufficiently realise what loveliness is and what it costs to produce—and lacking that essential knowledge shall not be quick to discern how desirable and how worshipful is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His life and death and in His calling to us to follow Him.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS DECISION AND RELIGIOUS GROWTH

I. The Rudiments of the Religious Spirit

And now let us see what conclusions our argument will carry. We have been picturing the spiritual life not as a life whose ideal was to edge away as far as possible from the toil and the reward of material activity, but one whose ideal was to wrest its spiritual treasures from these very things. The essence of the Christian life is not its mental conversations with God in retirement, but its personal co-operation with God in everyday action. Our highest moments of spiritual meditation will not be the poorer, but the richer by every experience of effort and enjoyment we have had in our struggle to make the most of the world which God has made our home. The thought is familiar enough, at least on one side. Christian teaching has always taught men to look upon the discipline of life as the means by which they can learn what moral and spiritual values are eternal, and acquire such moral and spiritual characters as will outlast the world. It is, perhaps, a less familiar thought that the delights of the world are equally charged with revelations of spiritual value and equally potent for

our spiritual education, and are not more fraught with temptation and danger than is the discipline of work and sorrow.

This brings the whole of the natural life, and no mere fraction of it, into the realm of religion. The religious life is the life that is responsive to the appeal of the spiritual in everything, in a sonnet as much as in a sermon, in a dance as well as in a duty. The Christian life is the life that perceives these spiritual values as Christ would perceive them and reacts toward them as He would. The Christian attitude toward the varied experiences of life is therefore not one of suspicion, though it is one of discrimination. Experience, grave or gay, is always presenting opportunities for choice; but the choice is not between refusing the world's gifts and accepting them. The choice is between accepting them sottishly and accepting them with a keen palate for their finest flavours; between accepting them selfishly and accepting them socially; between accepting them for the passing satisfaction of the flesh, and accepting them as a sacrament of God's goodness. All experiences are capable of being received with purely animal passion, or merely vegetable passivity; but all are capable of being received with a quickening of the spirit which can see them as symbols of the speech of God to our spirits. The choice we have then to make, to be religious, and especially to be Christian, is not the choice of refraining from doing the things which the natural man desires to do, but of doing them with more refinement of perception, more proportion between one activity and another, more

care to promote the enjoyments of our fellows, and a more insatiable passion for the best. It is necessary to grasp firmly this fundamental quality of the religious life if we are to think clearly and truly of the stages of religious growth.

The religious spirit is, then, the spirit wooed to self-forgetfulness by the experience of things really good, and inspired by their goodness to want to copy them and to share them. Inasmuch, then, as all perfection is summed up in God and revealed in Christ, the religious spirit, in its perfection, is just the love and worship of God in Christ. But this is the sum and total of it, its final flower. In its simplest essence it is just the disinterested desire for perfection, the recognition of something so absolutely worth while that one can forget oneself in the desire to enjoy it, to imitate it, to assimilate and re-embody it, to multiply it and pass it on. There is very little content in the religion of a man who can appreciate nothing but his religion. Who wants the praise of a man who can only praise one thing? Who wants the adulation of the narrow-minded, inexperienced, starved and pinched souls who have, as it were, been nowhere and seen nothing in God's universe? Does God glory in such praise? Surely the most religious spirit is the spirit which can find in the most of God's works their own distinctive worth and goodness. It will not find less in the more complex and exacting of life's experiences from having found more in those which are simple and elementary.

There are, indeed, degrees of good, things higher and lower, things too juvenile for the grown man to

linger over, successive choices to be made in which we turn aside from that, in order to make more sure of this. But we shall follow a false scent from the beginning if we fail to realise that in its simplest essence the religious spirit is one of sheer admiration for a good thing, and self-forgetfulness in seeking it. And that is why the religious spirit can be manifest in games and exercised by games just as it can be manifest in art and exercised by art. A good game is indeed a rudimentary form of art. It is an attempt to do something which has no permanent value except the value of the joy to which it gives rise. And the joy of a game is either the joy of seeing things so well done that we are carried out of ourselves with appreciation, or the joy of being carried out of ourselves in the attempt to do things well ourselves. It is a mixture of worship and self-forgetfulness, and dedication to perfection. Where there is this spirit (even in its most elementary form) there is, in boy or girl, a germ of the spirit life which is capable of untold expansion and development. Whereas, if this spirit be not present in its more elemental forms, the religious spirit, when it awakens later as a devotion to a moral ideal or in gratitude for the offer of eternal salvation, is apt to take in men and women a selfish, and even at times a sour, form. The more sources of admiration and springs of energetic action there are in any life, the richer will be its religious spirit when it matures.

II. The Growth of the Religious Spirit

There is, of course, as we have said, a proper sequence of admirations and interests in an unfolding life, and life goes astray if it falls out of its proper course, whether precociously arriving too soon at what should be its more advanced adjustments of itself to the world, or childishly refusing to grow up. The progress of the spirit is twofold—ever deeper and finer in its appreciations, and ever wider and wider in its sympathies. Thus growth in religion is growth in appreciation of the common things in life, coupled with growth in desire to make their appreciation universal. Self-centred action and self-consciousness are more and more replaced by consciousness of the divine potentialities of life, and self-devotion to the work of making those potentialities universally realised.

Yet another feature of our spiritual growth is the gradual concentration of our aims and interests towards a goal. The pursuit, by each individual, of those aims and interests for which he has some innate fitness, tends to make him, in the end, a person unlike any other in the particularity of his development. Out of the special ingredients of his life each one is capable of creating a unique personality, with unique value to his friends and to the world. There is in each of us a creative faculty like that which in the artist expresses itself in pictures. Each has a persistent striving toward some particular line of development along which he will find harmony and fulfilment. All personality aspires towards the unity and articulation of a work

of art. In some this expression comes, as I have said, through the medium of the plastic arts; in others, it will be through music, or through literature, through handicraft or through the education of children; or it may be by a combination of these, or along quite other lines. But none of us can reach his fulfilment except along lines particular to ourselves, each of us learning to live and labour truly for something we can appreciate.

Now, this urge in each individual is the most significant part of him from the point of view of his education. It is this power to do something and desire to do it vigorously and well that is the centre of his life. Whatever direction it takes the wise educator follows it. Growth will come strongly and naturally only if this surging life force in the individual is encouraged to express itself freely and enjoyably. At the beginning, this gift for action or perception, this creative power in each individual will be exercised both blindly and selfishly, for we are all utterly self-centred beings in our cradles, and crude in the extreme for many a year. But every such gift is capable both of refinement and re-direction, and the moral and spiritual education of each separate being will be successful in proportion as it is able to refine and re-direct this innate power, giving it increasing insight into what is worth doing and worth feeling, and increasing devotion to the aim of spreading abroad whatever it can produce that others can enjoy. The problem of growth is thus the right transition from blind self-centred and purposeless living to disinterested devotion to the best. It involves a progressive

understanding of the deeper, more spiritual values in life, and a progressive transition from an external view to a spiritual view of all things.

We have thus identified spiritual growth with growth in insight into the mysterious delightfulness, the all but inexpressible quality and charm which are to be found here, there, and everywhere in conduct and in the material world; coupled with growth in the habitual self-forgetfulness which is natural to those who are obsessed with the wonder of life and the opportunities of sharing its wonder. And having done so we can now go on to claim that such a development is in the strict sense natural. We are built for it. That is what is meant by the saying that man is made in the image of God. The power to find and reproduce and distribute good things is natural to him. There may be another nature warring in him too, a natural tendency to evil; but it is not more natural than the tendency to good. Growth in religion thus comes naturally to those who are so happily circumstanced that the natural growth of goodness is not thwarted. They have no need to cultivate some strange sixth sense. They have but to respond successively to the invitations of the spirit to see and to follow the best things in the natural unfolding of their lives.

Nature, in fact, is constantly urging life along a path of development which invites the unfolding of an ideal and unselfish life. In many features of our mental life this is evident. In the first place, Nature furnished us with that indefinable but all-powerful instinct which we call the instinct of the herd, which forbids us normally to be quite happy

when we are alone, thus driving us toward a sociable life. And then she has equipped us with a whole apparatus of mental powers which make it possible for us rapidly to enter into and acquire for ourselves the emotions, the ideas, the behaviour which we see embodied around us. Given, then, a social environment in which good models of action and feeling are manifest, and we have every chance of acquiring a right spirit and disposition. Moreover, adolescence brings with it a sudden power to appreciate big ideals of right and truth and beauty so that the transition from selfishness to altruism, and from spiritual blindness to spiritual vision is in the strict sense natural to every boy and girl when that great crisis of their physical growth steals over them.

These facts are the commonplaces of the psychology of the social life. We are so constituted that although we are born with only the most primitive physical appetites, and with not the smallest concern with the happiness of any life but our own, life tends to build up in us, by rapid processes, a sense of our oneness with others, a desire to be at peace with them, a readiness to surrender the view or the claim which thwarts the common welfare and to cultivate the ways which accord with the ways of others. Our behaviour, our emotional reactions, our intellectual concepts, are all assimilated quickly and easily from our social environment, and if it be favourable we may quite rapidly acquire a character which is both unselfish and discriminating. The apparatus by which the entail of Christianity is passed on from life to life is nothing less than amazing. If, then, fine ideals

are visibly embodied for us in the social environment of home, or school, or Church, if they are expressed in action and not paraded and pressed upon us in words, they have an astonishing power of communicating themselves by sheer contagion.

This is not, of course, to assert that they are communicated inevitably. We do not forget that evil embodied in the social life around us has also and equally its contagious power. Nature is too easily content with arrests in the development of her types, with delay and frustration. A fatal inertia besets all natural organisms, with their limited stores of energy and knowledge. We tire and are content to let the partial good we have achieved become the enemy of further progress. The path to the ideal life is a stiff climb upwards. We must recognise the tendency of the unperfected life to stagnate, to despair of perfection, to stiffen itself against the claims of the ideal, to entrench itself selfishly and stubbornly in the halfway house to nobility and goodness which it has reached. The price of progress is eternal vigilance and unwearying initiative.

These facts are not denied, but they do not annul the point of the present argument that spiritual development is strictly natural. And if it be strictly natural, though not inevitable or easy, it cannot be isolated from development as a whole. The spirit does not grow best on any diet of beliefs and experiences unrelated to its ordinary interests and activities. On the contrary, the way of progress in religion is the way of faithfulness to the claims and invitations of our ordinary life in the

world. The growth of the spirit is not won in a single engagement, or in any purely inward combat in which good and evil confront each other in disembodied shapes; it is won in a thousand successive engagements in which man is invited to choose the finer and more social action, the braver and more adventurous career, the truer and more perfect satisfaction. Energy, decision, discrimination—won anywhere will be available everywhere. It is the old story of the victory of Waterloo won on the playing fields of Eton. Fineness and strength of spirit are won by successive acts of choice and outputs of energy in every direction and equally in work and in play.

III. The Fostering of Growth

To secure the fitting spiritual development of any life, it is therefore necessary to assist it along the road of its highest natural development. That is best done by encouraging it to choose from time to time the occupations and aims into which it can throw itself with completest abandonment, because with completest sincerity, making sure that they are aims and occupations good in themselves and therefore calculated to lead the spirit onward and upward. There are such aims and pursuits, adapted to the experience and capacity of folk of every age and condition. From boyhood to manhood, from girlhood to womanhood, there are things to be done and things to be enjoyed exactly appropriate to the spirit's development at each stage of its journey. The doing and enjoying of these things will confirm

the spirit in its hold on what is good and true, educate its powers of right and true appreciation, increase its capacity for further discovery, and its energy for good living. The problem of religious education is to find a true succession of such pursuits and enjoyments, adapted to the expanding capacity of growing lives.

One of the discoveries of the last few years has been the proper spiritual expression of childhood. We have found, at least approximately, the forms of occupation into which boys and girls in their pre-adolescent days can throw themselves with complete zest, and the maximum of moral and spiritual profit. There is more than one variation of the prescription, but the type of activity is sufficiently covered by the one word "scouting." Scouting is very nearly the full and adequate expression of a small boy's free energy. Through scouting he can bring into healthy and vigorous being whatever capacity there is in him for discovering the make of God's world and establishing himself as a willing and useful member of it. If some great idea of God overarching His world overarches him too, he is, under skilful leadership, treading the upward spiritual path far more effectively than he would be doing it if he were spending his energies in cultivating spiritual states or forming brave resolutions. We are past the day when the ideal Christian child was thought to be one who was exercised beyond his years about the state of his soul, or the spiritual condition of his elders. We should count as painful and disastrous precocity some of the traits which our forefathers

held up for admiration in the ideally pious child. Up to the age of adolescence, at least, we reckon that the child's spirit should grow with as little as possible of self-consciousness and a maximum exhibition of juvenile spirits.

When we come to the later period of childhood and the early period of youth, the same principles will hold true, though we have not yet been so successful in applying them. For boys we have team games to develop keenness, resource, and esprit de corps, and for girls the same opportunities are increasing. But we have not yet thought out the equivalent of scouting as a real expression of the part which youth might play, and might rejoice to play, in the service of the world as a whole. One might speculate a little on the form which such activities might take. There are boys and girls who have found themselves and have made good, simply through giving themselves to the assistance of younger children in their games. There are middle-class schools which have made the idea of universal brotherhood real to themselves by entertaining boys of other schools in holiday fashion, or by building open-air swimming baths for the neighbouring villagers, and by other such acts of service appropriate to their own interests and powers. We have already risked a generalisation by suggesting* that youth might effectively learn brotherhood if it would set seriously about the work of providing good games and proper facilities for good games for everybody, and would pledge itself to initiate the backward and unfortunate into the

* In Chapter IV.

playing of them. Or if this falls short of what is needed to capture the growing interests of the adolescent in the welfare of society, one might enlist youth in clubs and coteries for cleansing and beautifying the streets and squares of our neglected cities and villages, and their older members might pass on in due time to attempt the harder task of cleansing and beautifying the things that are done in their council chambers.

All this, however, is speculation, set down more for the sake of illustration than as a definite proposal, and also for the sake of stimulating others to experiment. The point for insistence is that the dedication of spirit to be asked of early youth and later childhood should not be too abstract or difficult for youth's understanding, and should not exact too sharp a discipline. Youth should not be too much preoccupied with the dark sides of life and the shortcomings of others. Forms of activity should be suggested to youth through which the pleasure of helping others can be realised, and the desire to serve others directed along lines pleasurable in themselves. Discrimination between what is good and what is better should be trained through art and play, and all sense of opposition between games and recreation on the one hand and religion on the other should be absolutely broken down. It will be through the right choice of congenial recreations supporting and confirming its more abstract moral choices that youth will best achieve its spiritual development, learning to put life and energy into the things which minister to life and to set its face against those things which minister to evil.

We may thus sum the matter up in two points. In the first place the activities which will minister to the spiritual development of youth must either be activities which youth itself approves or activities recommended by people whose judgment youth approves. It only leads to mental and spiritual regressions and the tangling of the lines of development if any personality commits itself in action to courses to which it is not committed in its own heart and in its own judgment; and it complicates the course of youth's spiritual development endlessly if the ideal of the spiritual life is associated with the negation of any activities which youth in its heart of hearts believes to be wholesome and good, or with the exalting of activities for which youth has no great use or aptitude. The discouragement of any form of innocent amusement is a case in point, and the identification of Christian service exclusively or even primarily with Sunday School Teaching is another.

In the second place, in view of the limits of youth's experience of life, the activities which are associated with the idea of Christian service should not be too exacting or ascetic. The point has been made already incidentally, but it should be made to stand out thus prominently by itself as a principle of first-rate importance. Youth does not know how strong are the forces of evil in the world and how much a point of honour therefore it is with a right-thinking man or woman to shoulder the burden of life and enter the lists in battle for the right. It is for manhood and womanhood to translate the dreams and games of youth into the stuff of the

Kingdom of God in the hard business of life. The business of youth is rather to fix its sense of values for itself than to make them operative for the world. And this it can do to a large extent by exercising itself in games which give value to what is excellent, honourable, and tasteful. If youth will but learn to appraise highly the things that are lovely in themselves, to hate whatever is cheap and shoddy, and to value goodwill above all things, manhood and womanhood will not go far astray. Decision rightly exercised in these ways will lead almost invariably to self-discipline and self-sacrifice in the end.

The ethic for youth should not, then, be too hard or dour, unless the times are so essentially and unescapably harsh and dour that anything easier would seem like shirking, as it did in war time. But it is not always war time, and for the more normal years an ethic more naturally and obviously joyous is appropriate. Youth's ethic should be neither narrowly utilitarian nor darkly puritanical. It will not go far astray if it has these two main principles as its foundations : viz., to do nothing that is not deeply worth while, and to keep to oneself nothing that is. Or we may put the same thing in other words and say that we should seek to share widely whatever we really value and find something to value greatly in whatever we choose to do. There is a mine of morality in those two precepts. They express in terms of common use and plain meaning a good deal of man's duty to love his neighbour and his God. For the love of God is based on the love of whatever is

lovely in God's world, and the love of man is the will to pass on to him whatever we ourselves have found to be good.

IV. Religious Decision

And now we have carried the argument far enough to bring out the essentials of a true religious decision. A religious decision should link the determination to follow a particular course of action with the conviction that to do so is absolutely right. It should, therefore, be a decision having quite clear and concrete meaning when it is made; it should appeal to a person's own conviction and experience as a thing really good in itself, and not only according to an arbitrary code of actions labelled religious; the doing of it should be so desirable in the eyes of the doer that the determination to do it releases new floods of energy; and it should carry with it the sense that God wills man to do just such good deeds. A religious decision is thus a decision to do something in the direction in which life becomes fuller, richer, more deeply satisfying and stirring. We have already emphasised the necessity for youth that such decisions should be in line with the natural joy-seeking impulses and constructive ambitions of all growing life, and should not be concerned with artificial interests and merely "religious" aims, that they should indeed be the choice of ways that are deeply felt to be worth while in work and play and comradeship. That also necessitates their being specific in meaning and not merely vague and abstract.

This necessity is all the greater if decision is invited under conditions when religious emotion is stirred, as it may be stirred, for example, in mass meetings. The more the emotional life is quickened on any such occasion, the more the need for securing that the decision should be worked out to some clear and wide-reaching change of practice, in home life, or the use of leisure, or the attitude to one's work, or one's dealings with one's friends. The concrete expression of the decision in terms of ordinary secular life is needed to keep it practical and sane. Moreover, such practical and concrete decisions, require time for the person addressed to translate the appeal which has stirred him into the terms of his own life and see what actually it would involve in conduct—at any rate as a next step. That means that his thought needs to be quickened simultaneously with his emotional life, so that his critical faculties are brought to bear upon the question of what he is about to do, and his judgment is satisfied that it carries with it the assent of all that is best in him. For this reason experienced psychologists call attention to the danger of precipitating decisions that do not represent the deliberate thought of the individual upon their specific content. If decision be recommended at a mass meeting, opportunity for such quiet reflection needs to be provided, before the decision is consummated.

To pursue the matter further would raise questions of evangelistic method outside our present scope. It is, however, necessary to say a little more about decision itself, and especially

about the stages through which religious decision ought to pass to its consummation. Decision for God must be an ascending process of decision for the right and the true, the good and the beautiful—a process carried a step further every time some fresh aspect of right or truth or goodness, with its fresh demand for quality, comes home to us. The challenge to more comprehensive decision may come to us in special crises now and then when something happens to bring our life as a whole under review, and we can see more clearly if it is running off after unworthy aims. It may come tragically in moments of disillusionment to lives which have embraced wrong courses and pursued them till they have ended in degradation and disaster; or it may come in the natural crisis of adolescence, when life has a way of presenting itself to consciousness as a whole, and the choices between right and wrong stand out more stark and clear than they are ever likely to do again. In all these cases, however, decision will be effectively Christian exactly in proportion as the thought of God and the name of Christ are linked with the thought of definite ways of ministering to the joy and wholesomeness of life.

If Christ is thus identified with all the highest courses, the choice of any one of them may become the occasion for a life to dedicate itself to Him. The opportunity to ask for decisions for Christ may then be found as the natural climax of any of a hundred different appeals; if only folk are taught that whenever they are fired with a passion for quality in things or in behaviour, their fire is fed by the flame of God Himself. God, the supreme

artist, the supreme craftsman, the supreme lover, is at the heart of all the creative joy and energy which well up in us and in our loves. So understood, life is full of invitations to decide for God, and the wise will be watchful to point them out at every turn. Each particular decision can be made a symbol of the total dedication of the life to God—true witness to our aspiration to be His entirely; true witness also to His readiness to take whatever we are fit to offer, in token of the whole.

Of all possible religious decisions, the one most nearly capable of expressing the full ideal of devotion to Christ is the act of joining His Church. The evangelistic appeal should therefore be most constantly associated with this particular choice. Nothing else can so well express the will to be always and in all things Christ's disciples, ever learning more of our calling in Him. But, for this to be the case, the Church must be to its members not only a place of Christian worship and general Christian teaching, but a school of Christian work and Christian play—a place where Christian ideals of truth and beauty are embodied in definite forms of education and amusement, and where Christian ideals of life are translated from the general into the particular in intimate Christian conference. Such an ideal might entail a considerable enlargement of the recreative activities of many churches and a criticism of the paltriness of others. It might require new forms of Christian education and Christian fellowship, uniting prayer with study and discussion of many practical social issues. But the expenditure of effort would not be too great

if it succeeded in making clear to Christian people how their spiritual ideals should inter-penetrate their work and play. The world needs individual witnesses to the meaning of Christianity quite as much as it needs public missions, but the average Christian is at present tongue-tied as a witness because he does not clearly understand the relation between the special inward experiences of the Spirit which are fostered in public worship and the common outward activities of daily life; and no amount of exhortation to evangelise his neighbours will make him anything but a nuisance and a hypocrite until he does.

At the present time, however, the appeal to join the Church as an act of Christian decision is hindered because the conception of life commonly connected with Church membership is something rather unwholesomely introspective and selfishly aloof from the greater human causes, if not even darkly antagonistic to the natural joy of life itself. Wrong though such a view may be, it is not wholly unaccountable; and whilst it holds, extraordinary measures are required. If those outside the Churches knew more of the sweet charities and wholesome goodness which grow up in the protection of the creed and worship which to them seem so forbidding, they might be more ready to throw in their lot with the Churches as they are—with all their disconcerting faults and puzzling features. But seeing they are ignorant of these things, the Churches must sometimes humble themselves and ask newcomers to join the fellowship, not of the Church itself, but of some more limited and welcoming group

of kindred souls within it, or in free association with it.

And now one thing alone remains to be said. Throughout this book the emphasis has been laid upon the naturalness of the Christian life and the way in which its inner growth should march with its unfolding interests and powers. There is, however, another side to the matter, not, indeed, overlooked so far, but needing in these closing paragraphs to stand out in the clearest light. The experience of God is more than the experience of goodness or of beauty, or of growth in the appreciation of these. The name of Christ is no mere symbol for perfection. The crown of Christianity is the personal relation of the Christian person to the Christian God, and it is reached through intimate personal communion with Jesus Christ It is an experience that cannot be consummated until our natures have been stirred and searched by Christ to their lowest deeps. And in that searching and stirring we are bound to undergo the deep humiliation of self-knowledge and to be called to the utter abandonment of self, with all its false perspectives and mistaken aims. Thus, the things which are the commonplaces of religious teaching—repentance, faith, and self-surrender—are still the things that matter most. But these things will both mean more in themselves and seem in better harmony with whatever else we know of life's true values precisely in proportion to the thoroughness with which we have taken up the whole of our natural life into the scope of our Christian experience and purpose.

So the upshot of this book is not in any way to discredit the evangelist's aim of bringing individuals to a personal experience of God through Jesus Christ; it is rather to show that there are a thousand avenues by which the beginnings of that personal experience may be acquired. Nor does it in the least belittle the Church's constant effort, by its worship and instruction, its sacraments and sermons, to arouse us to the reality of God's Personal Being and the demands He makes upon us as a whole; it is rather to discriminate against a Gospel which sets God in opposition to life. The choice is not between life and God; it is between life ever waning and dwindling because antagonistic to its own ideal, and life ever waxing and expanding because yielded to the control of its true Master, Christ Himself. So far as this spreads out a broader view of God's dealings with us than that generally held, it makes the problem of educating the human spirit in the Christian way a bigger problem, and relates it more closely with human education as a whole. To that wider question of spiritual training we may perhaps return in another book; but whether then or now the point of importance is not where Christian experience begins in the life of nature, but where it ends in the heart of God. From first to last there is no break in the ascending path; but everywhere life bears witness to the love of our Father—Holy and Eternal—and calls upon us to rise up and live as His whole-hearted, joyous sons and daughters.

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